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Inside :

**The conquest of
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**Down
the
Ages - 5**

Page 15



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12
**Cricket for
the Crocodile**
(From the pen of
Ruskin Bond)



9
**A King's Respect
for Tribals**
(New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala)



20
**How the Land
Was Levelled**
(Stories from
many cultures)



22
Fishing Out Ill-luck
(A folktale from
Haryana)



36
**Abracadabracalobra
-deebracaloombo**



48
**The
Goddess
Who Ran
Away**



CONTENTS

★ From Our Mail-bag	...8
★ An Invitation to Fight (<i>Down the ages</i>)	...15
★ The Heroes of Yuksam (<i>NBSAaanP's tales</i>)	...16
★ Understanding Poverty (<i>When they were young</i>)	...18
★ Ask Away (<i>Prof. Manoj Das provides answers to queries from readers</i>)	...19
★ Saintly Stranger (<i>A Jataka tale</i>)	...26
★ No Escape for the Burglar (<i>Legends of India</i>)	...28
★ News Flash	...30
★ Laugh Till You Drop (<i>Humour</i>)	...32
★ Indiascope	...33
★ Puzzle Dazzle	...34
★ On the Peak, 50 Years Ago	...40
★ Towards Better English	...42
★ Prabhudas and God	...43
★ Story of Ganesa	...44
★ ABC of Science	...46
★ Vasudha	...50
★ The Voice from the Roof	...52
★ Fun Times	...54
★ The Man with Strange Insight (<i>True cases of mystery & detection</i>)	...56
★ The Costly Apple (<i>From the Arabian Nights</i>)	...59
★ Australia- Winners for a third time	...62
★ Let Us Know	...64
★ Photo Caption Contest	...66

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Index of nation's health

The world heaved a sigh of great relief when it was announced that the epidemic small-pox had been eradicated once for all. Some thirty years ago, a fight started worldwide to wipe away yet another scourge - polio - from the face of the earth. The year 2005 has been declared the target date when the world would see the last of the polio incidence. This is proof enough of the world's concern for the health of the people.

There are known diseases for which there are vaccines and drugs to prevent their occurrence, and medicines to cure them. Instances are not rare when unknown or mysterious diseases break out.

This is where the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other institutions - official and non-governmental - play important roles in researching for preventive and curative measures.

What is, however, unfortunate is when people, whose concern it is to take care of the health of others, are found wanting in their duty and commitment. This is more so in the case of the growing generation whose health should be of paramount importance. If their health is protected, then the future of every nation can only be bright.

It is, therefore, the duty of parents to join hands with organisations to ensure the health and physical development of children. Negligence can never be condoned.

Founded by
B. Nagi Reddi
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Manoj Das

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K. Ramakrishnan

Words of Wisdom

Equal for God

**“Don’t laugh at me,
Don’t call me names,
Don’t get your pleasure from my pain,
In God’s eyes, we’re all the same,
Some day we’ll all have perfect wings,
Don’t laugh at me...”**

- Mark Wills

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Enter the Heroes of India Quiz and win fabulous prizes

Heroes of India - 20

Here are some of the literary heroes
of our past. Do you know them?

Three
all correct entries
will receive bicycles
as awards.*



1

I'm a devotional poet. I'm known for my *bhajans* and *dohas* (couplets). I'm also known as a social and religious reformer. Who am I?

2

I've written 1,330 couplets in Tamil covering a wide range of topics. What is my name?

3

I have composed more than 5,000 *abhangs* in Marathi in praise of Lord Pandurang. Do you know my name?

4

I'm known as *Kavi Chakravathy* or emperor among poets. I wrote the *Ramayana* in Tamil in 10,000 verses. Name me.

5

I authored '*Sur Sagar*', the ocean of melody. This magnum opus contains 100,000 poems in *Brij Bhasha*. Do you know me?

Fill in the blanks next to each question legibly. Which of these five is your favourite hero and why? Write 10 words on **My favourite literary hero is**

Name of participant:.....

.....Age:.....Class:.....

Address:.....

Pin:.....Ph:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Signature of parent:.....

Please tear off this page and mail it to

Heroes of India Quiz-20

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No.82, Defence Officers' Colony

Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.

On/before **June 5, 2003.**

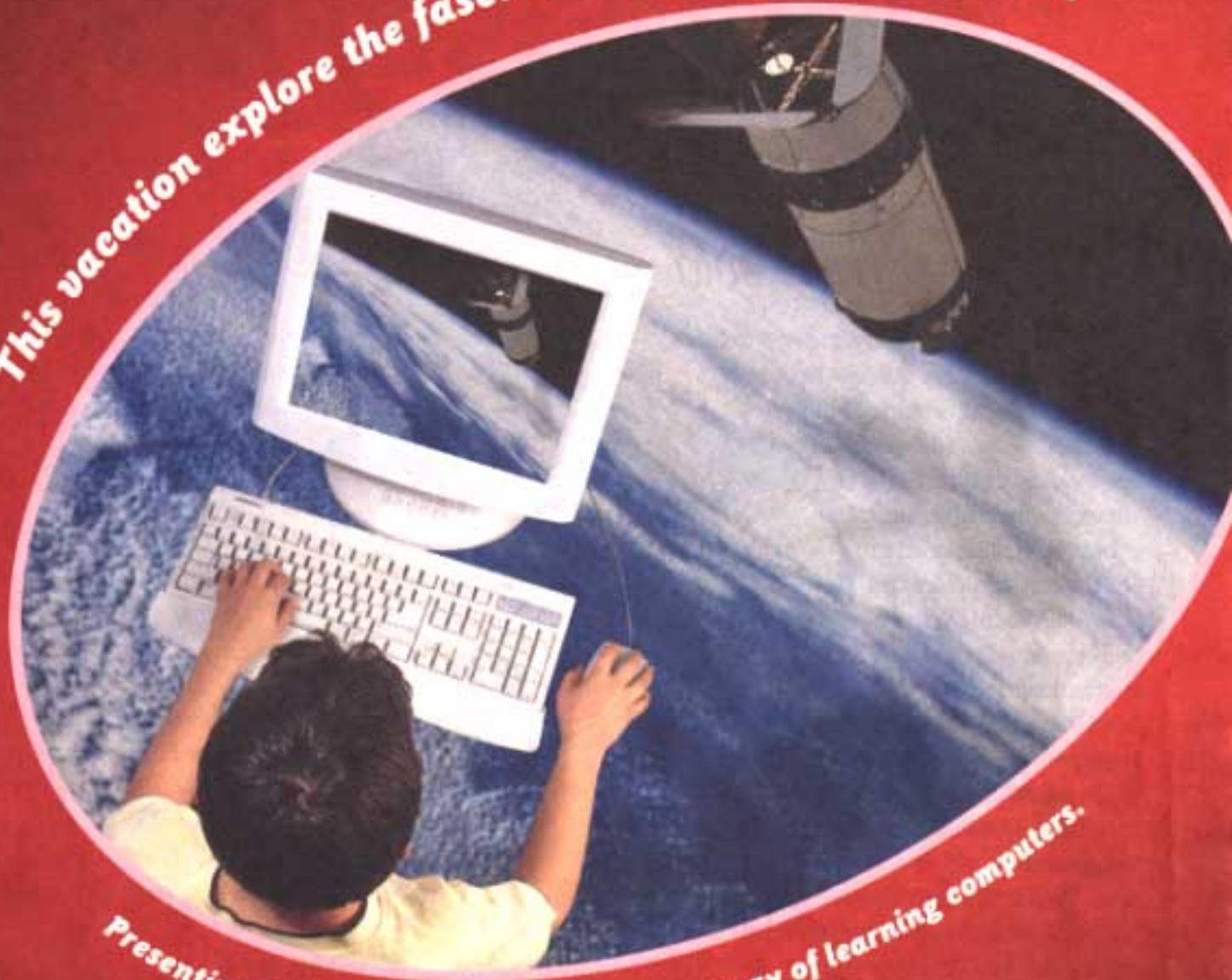
Instructions

1. The contest is open to children in the age group 8-14 years.
2. *Three winners will be selected for this contest from entries in all the language editions. **Winners will receive bicycles of appropriate size.** If there are more than one all correct entries, winners will be selected on the basis of the best description of **My favourite hero.**
3. The judges' decision will be final.
4. No correspondence will be entertained in this regard.
5. The winners will be intimated by post.

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Gopi Kishore Panda of Mylapore, Chennai (winner of Heroes of India Contest) writes:

I love reading *Chandamama*. I became a subscriber 6 months ago. My mother was once a regular reader of your Oriya edition *Janhamamu*. You will be happy to know that I won a bicycle in your Heroes of India contest.

From Pune writes Anant Shankar Jadhav:

I am a regular reader of your popular English *Chandamama*. In the March issue, I was much impressed with “Dreams that come true” and “Cricket comes to India”. I hope you will give more about triangular, quadrangular and pentangular matches and the names of some of the well-known players of those times. Presentday school boys will find them interesting. I also hope you will publish more stories from the Arabian Nights.



This came from Manjubhashini Nadar of Chennai:

I am an MBA working with a multinational company. I still love *Chandamama* which I started reading when I was 8. That was 18 years ago. The magazine helps me keep up my knowledge of Indian culture and tradition.

Reader Rabindranath from Trichur, Kerala, has this to say:

The new look of my beloved *Chandamama* is great. The format is very neat, and the reading matter and get-up unorthodox and is apace with the changing times. I hope the feature on bio-diversity (Vasudha) will continue. Bio-diversity is part of India's rich heritage. I want to know more about this subject which will make my country rich in the economic sense, too.

**ALL NEW !
JUS' FOR YOU !!**

**Here are some new products
in the market that might
interest you!**



Funskool's games package Innovative games for your mind

Do you get bored playing the usual indoor games in the holidays? Funskool India has launched a set of five innovative games. These

take-anywhere-games are Big Bazar Chase, Fast Food, Racing Champion, Math-Magician, and Fox & Geese.

The Math-Magician is a mind game. It tests your familiarity with various mathematical calculations. The Fox & Geese tests your logical and analytical abilities.

The Big Bazar Chase and Racing Champion are leisure games, where you have to race ahead to become the winner. Fast Food is a skill game; where you have to carefully collect the playthings with the aid of a fork, without disturbing the opponent's play pieces.

Each game is priced Rs. 49/- only. Hey! Where are you rushing to? The nearest toy shop?

**NEW TALES OF
KING VIKRAM
AND
THE VETALA**

A King's respect for tribals

Dark was the night and fearful the atmosphere. Flashes of lightning revealed weird faces all around. Thunder rumbled, jackals moaned, and the erratic wind howled.

But King Vikram did not swerve. He climbed the ancient tree and brought the corpse down. But as

soon as he began crossing the cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King, it seems the wilderness has more fascination for you than the affairs of your state. Have you heard of Vijaysingh? He was meant to lead the life of a forest-dweller, but developed a fascination for the affairs of state. Let me tell you what the consequences were. Pay attention to my narration. That might bring you some relief as well."

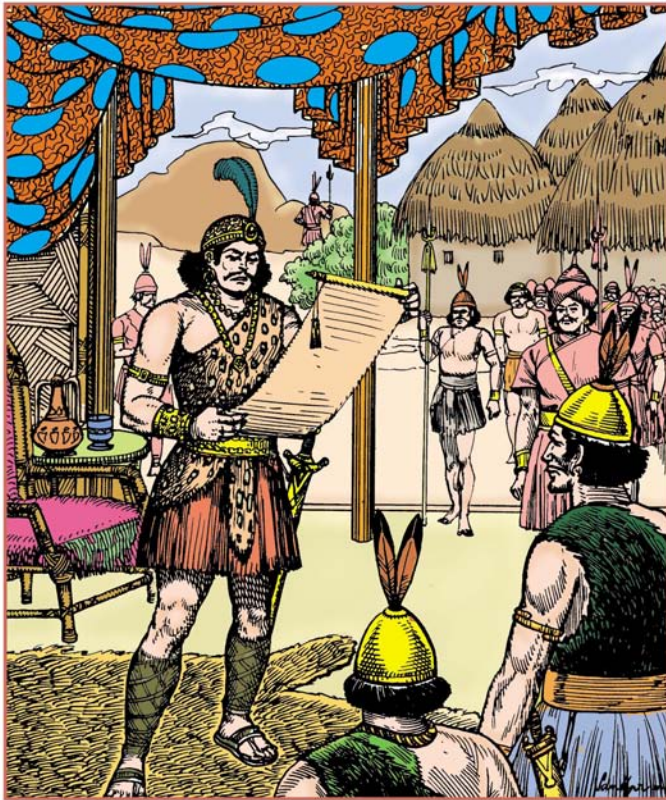
The vampire went on: "Amaravarma, the King of Krishnagiri, was feared by the kings of the neighbourhood. He commanded a strong army. In fact, the backbone of his army was a battalion of daring tribal soldiers. They were recruited from among the forest-dwellers. They were as simple as they were daring.

Virsingh was the chief of the tribal people who lived in the forest that spread along the kingdom's frontier. He was a true friend of the king. Once a year he visited the capital where the king would receive him warmly. He was happy to see his tribesmen faithfully serving the king.

Once a year the king sent his emissaries to the forest. Through them, Virsingh would also send to the king a number of presents like tusks, tiger-skin, and precious stones. Also, he would despatch a batch of young men every year to join the tribal regiment. This practice continued for a long time.

Virsingh had a son named Vijay. He was young and





intelligent. What is more, he was quite devoted to his father. But he loved to toy with new ideas.

One day, he asked his father, “Must we remain subservient to the king forever? Isn’t he strong because he has the support of our people? Why should we send him valuable gifts every year?”

“Son, we’re not subservient to the king. He’s my friend. It is wise to have a friendly king than a hostile one. Besides, how did the idea get into your mind that we’re quite important? Isn’t it because our people have proved their merit in the royal army? How would anybody know that we’re a brave people if our youth got no chance to prove their mettle? They get that chance only because they are in the army!” explained Virsingh.

“I don’t feel as you do, father. I’m afraid, the king feigns friendship just because he’s benefited by your gesture. Don’t send him gifts anymore and stop supplying him soldiers, and you’ll then see what his real attitude is!” asserted Vijay.

“But, son, I can’t take such a step. However, I’m old. Let me retire. Then, do whatever you deem fit,” said Virsingh. He then called the prominent people of his tribe and announced his own retirement and Vijaysingh’s

appointment as chieftain. A few days afterwards, the king’s emissaries called on Vijaysingh. He told them point blank, “We’re no longer in a position to send gifts or soldiers to the king. We would even request the king to send back those of our people who are in the king’s service.”

The emissaries left. A week later a messenger from the royal court met Vijaysingh and delivered a message. “Send a hundred tribal youths immediately, or face the consequences. The forest will be attacked, and all those tribal men in the king’s army will be put to death!”

“Is this the king’s order?” asked Vijaysingh, who was really taken aback.

“Indeed, the minister himself asked me to deliver this message to you!” said the messenger.

“Very well. Go and tell him, we’re ready to face the consequences!” Vijaysingh roared out.

The messenger left. In a few days, the king’s army came and raided the forest-dwellers. A fight broke out. The king’s soldiers were not familiar with the routes through the forest. The tribesmen misled them into dangerous corners and easily captured most of them. The rest fled away. Vijaysingh asked the prisoners.

“Why didn’t the king send the tribal regiment against us?”

“The tribal soldiers are now prisoners,” informed the king’s soldiers.

Just then a spy whispered to Vijaysingh that a girl had been brought into the forest by some people who seemed to belong to the palace. The group, with the girl in a palanquin, was in a remote part of the forest.

Vijaysingh sent his men to capture the party. The palanquin bearers and their guards resisted, but not for long. They were captured.

The guards disclosed that the girl was none other than the princess, the king’s only child and heir to the throne. She was on her way to her maternal uncle’s house. But the minister had asked the guards to lead her deep inside the forest and kill her.

Vijaysingh told the leader of the guards: “I can guess the minister’s motive. If the princess is killed, the king will be without an heir. That would pave the way for the minister to usurp the throne in due course. Go, tell the

minister that we, too, are fighting the king. Let him join us so that we can conspire against the king.”

The minister came too readily. But no sooner had he got off his horse than Vijaysingh had him beheaded.

He then personally led the princess back to the palace. He met the king and told him everything.

The king embraced Vijaysingh. “My lord, will you please order the release of our people in your army who have been thrown into the prison?” said Vijay.

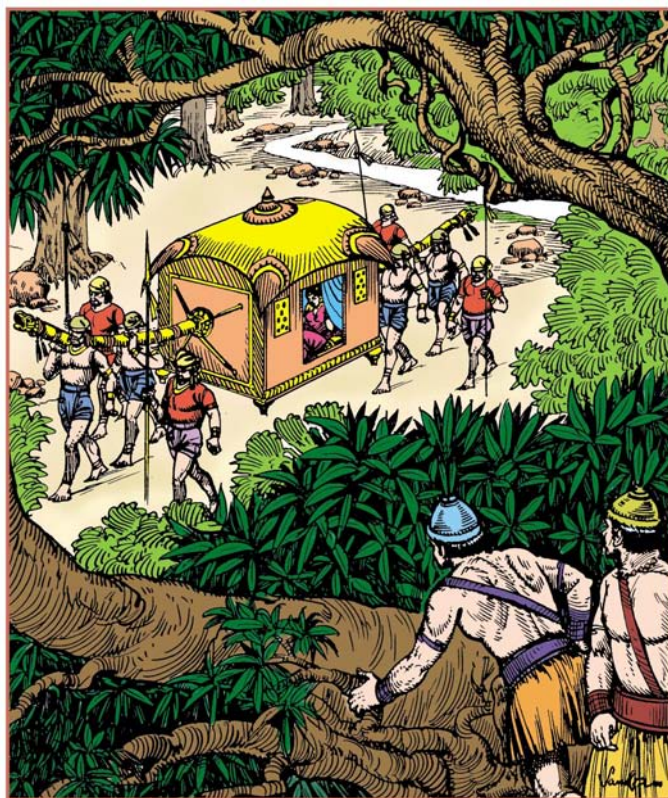
The king looked surprised. At once he set the soldiers free. After returning to the forest, Vijaysingh sent the king his annual tribute in the form of gifts and another batch of young men for the army.

The vampire paused and then demanded: “O King! Why did Vijay change his mind? Why did he kill the minister? Answer me, if you can, O King! If you choose to keep mum though you may know the answer, your head would roll off your shoulders!”

The king answered at once: “We must not forget that Vijay was devoted to his father. He trusted his father’s opinion of the king. But his youthful pride prompted him to test the king. He wanted to know whether the king had respect for his tribal subjects.

“When he was told that the king had ordered the tribal regiment to be put to death, he guessed that something was amiss. The king could not have passed such a brutal order. His suspicion only grew when he heard that the decision was the minister’s.

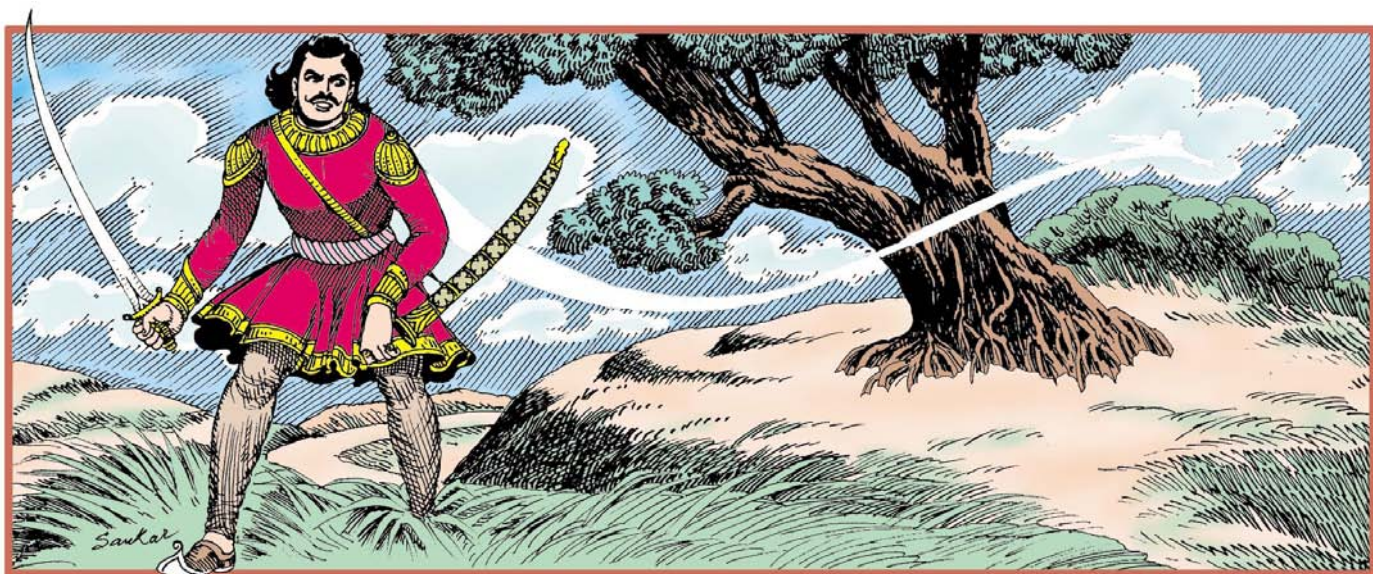
“Vijay’s suspicion that the minister, unknown to the



king, was trying to weaken the king’s army by making it fight the tribal people, was confirmed. That was when he found out that the minister was also trying to kill the princess.

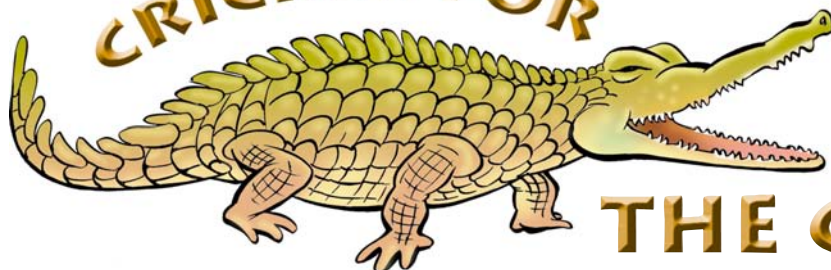
“Vijay killed the minister because a villain like the minister did not deserve any better treatment. He decided to maintain his relationship with the king as of old.”

No sooner had King Vikram concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip and flew back to the ancient tree.



From the pen of
Ruskin Bond

CRICKET FOR



THE CROCODILE

Ranji was up at dawn. It was Sunday, a school holiday. Although he was supposed to be preparing for his exams, only a fortnight away, he couldn't resist one or two more games before getting down to history and algebra and other unexciting things.

"I'm going to be a Test cricketer when I grow up," he told his mother. "Of what use will maths be to me?"

"You never know," said his mother, who happened to be more of a cricket fan than his father. "You might need maths to work out your batting average. And as for history, wouldn't you like to be a part of history? Famous cricketers make history!"

"Making history is all right," said Ranji. "As long as I don't have to remember the date on which I make it!"

Ranji met his friends and team mates in the park. The grass was still wet with dew, the sun only just rising behind the distant hills. The park was full of flower-beds, and swings and slides for smaller children. The boys would have to play on the river bank against their rivals, the village boys. Ranji did not have a full team that morning, but he was just looking for a 'friendly' match. The really important game would be held the following Sunday.

The village team was quite good because the

boys lived near each other and practised a lot together, whereas Ranji's team was drawn from all parts of the town. There was the baker's boy, Nathu; the tailor's son, Sunder; the postmaster's son, Prem; and the bank manager's son, Anil. They were some of the better players. Sometimes their fathers also turned up for a game. The fathers weren't very good, but you couldn't tell them that. After all, they helped to provide bats and balls and pocket-money.

A regular spectator at these matches was Nakoo the crocodile, who lived in the river. Nakoo means Nosey, but the village boys were very respectful and called him Nakoo-ji, or Nakoo sir. He had a long snout, rows of ugly-looking teeth (some of them badly in need of fillings), and a powerful scaly tail.

He was nearly fifteen feet long, but you did not see much of him; he swam low in the water and glided smoothly through the tall grasses near the river back to bask in the sun. He did not care for people, especially cricketers. He disliked the noise they made, frightening away the water-birds and other creatures, which were required for an interesting menu, and it was also alarming to have cricket balls plopping around in the shallows where he liked to rest.

Once Nakoo crept quite close to the bank manager, who was resting against one of the trees near the river



MAHE...

bank. The bank manager was a portly gentleman, and Nakoo seemed to think he would make a good meal. Just then a party of villagers had come along, beating drums for a marriage party. Nakoo retired to the muddy waters of the river. He was a little tired of swallowing frogs, eels, and herons. That juicy bank manager would have made a nice change. He decided, he'd grab him one day!

&&&&&

The village boys were a little bigger than Ranji and his friends, but they did not bring their fathers along. The game made very little sense to the older villagers. And when balls came flying across fields to land in milk pails or cooking pots, they were as annoyed as the crocodile.

Today, the men were busy in the fields, and Nakoo the crocodile was wallowing in the mud behind a screen of reeds and water-lilies. How beautiful and innocent those lilies looked! Only sharp eyes would have noticed Nakoo's long snout thrusting above the broad flat leaves of the lilies. His eyes were slits. He was watching.

Ranji struck the ball hard and high. Splash! It fell into the river about thirty feet from where Nakoo lay. Village boys and town boys dashed into the shallow water to look for the ball. Too many of them! Crowds made Nakoo nervous. He slid into the river, crossed over to the opposite bank, and sulked.

As it was a warm day, nobody seemed to want to get out of the water. Several boys took off their clothes, deciding that it was a better day for swimming than for cricket. Nakoo's mouth watered as he watched those bare limbs splashing about.

"We're supposed to be practising," said Ranji, who took his cricket seriously. "We won't win next week."

"Oh, we'll win easily," said Anil, joining him on the river bank. "My father says he's going to play."

"The last time he played,

we lost," said Ranji. "He made two runs and forgot to field."

"He was out of form," said Anil, ever loyal to his father, the bank manager.

Sheroo, the captain of the village team, joined them. "My cousin from Delhi is going to play for us. He made a hundred in one of the matches there."

"He won't make a hundred on this wicket," said Ranji. "It's slow at one end and fast at the other."

"Can I bring *my* father?" asked Nathu, the baker's son.

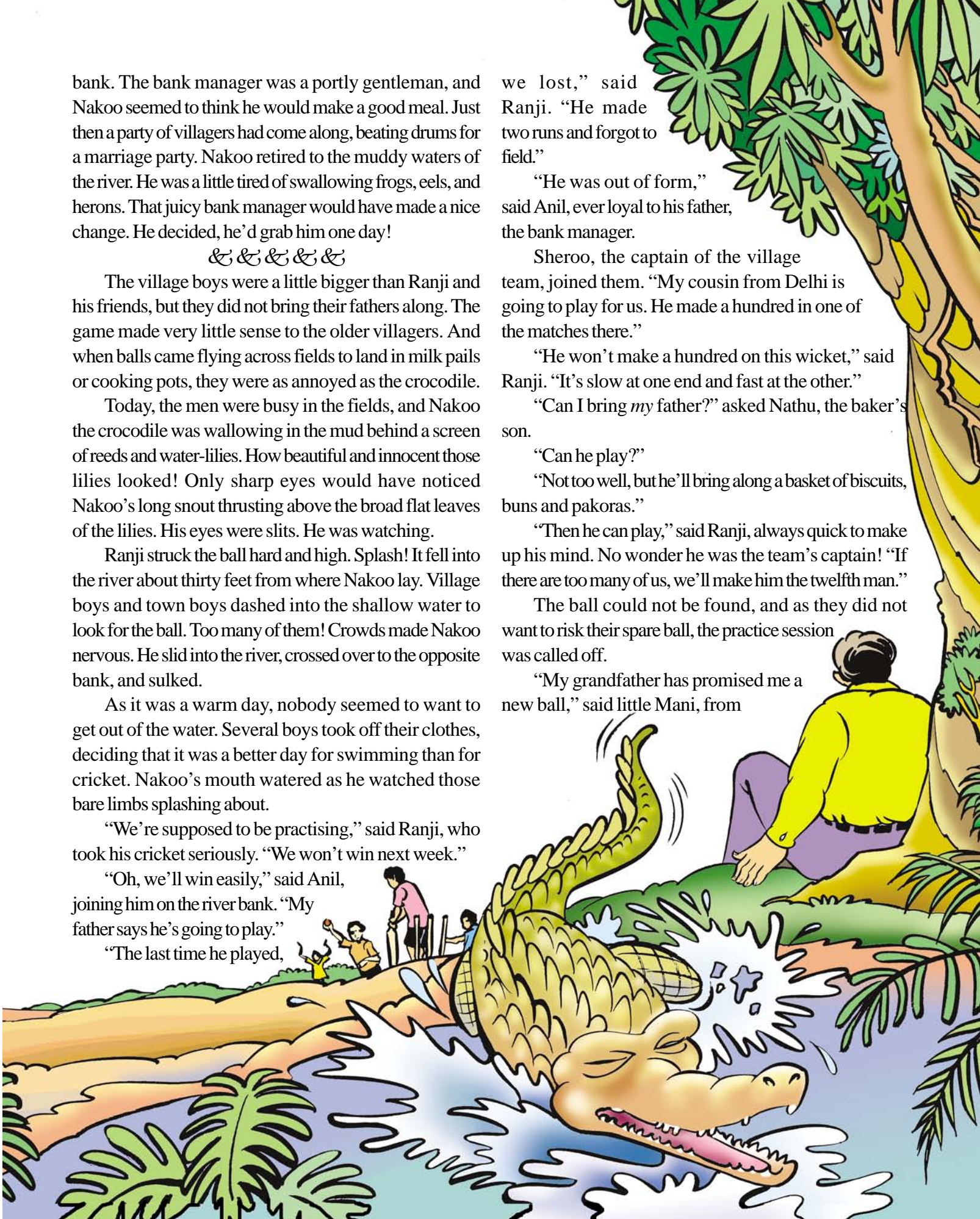
"Can he play?"

"Not too well, but he'll bring along a basket of biscuits, buns and pakoras."

"Then he can play," said Ranji, always quick to make up his mind. No wonder he was the team's captain! "If there are too many of us, we'll make him the twelfth man."

The ball could not be found, and as they did not want to risk their spare ball, the practice session was called off.

"My grandfather has promised me a new ball," said little Mani, from



the village team, who bowled tricky leg-breaks which bounced to the off side.

“Does he want to play, too?” asked Ranji.

“No, of course not. He’s nearly eighty.”

“That’s settled then,” said Ranji. “We’ll all meet here at nine o’clock next Sunday. Fifty overs a side.”

They broke up, Sheroo and his team wandering back to the village, while Ranji and his friends got onto their bicycles (two or three to a bicycle, since not everyone had one), and cycled back to town.

Nakoo, left in peace at last, returned to his favourite side of the river and crawled some way up the river bank, as if to inspect the wicket. It had been worn smooth by the players, and looked like a good place to relax. Nakoo moved across it. He felt pleasantly drowsy in the warm sun, so he closed his eyes for a little nap. It was good to be out of the water for a while.

& & & & &

The following Sunday morning, a cycle bell tinkled at the gate. It was Nathu, waiting for Ranji to join him.

Ranji hurried out of the house, carrying his bat and a thermos of lime juice thoughtfully provided by his mother.

“Have you got the stumps?” he asked.

“Sunder has them.”

“And the ball?”

“Yes. And Anil’s father is bringing one too, provided he can open the batting!”

Nathu rode, while Ranji sat on the cross bar with his bat and thermos. Anil was waiting for them outside his house.

“My father has gone ahead on his scooter. He’s picking up Nathu’s father. I’ll follow with Prem and Sunder.”

Most of the boys got to the river bank before the bank manager and the baker. They left their bicycles under a shady banyan tree and ran down the gentle slope to the river. And then, one by one they stopped,

astonished by what they saw. They gaped in awe at their cricket pitch.

Across it, basking in the soft warm sunshine, was Nakoo the crocodile.

“Where did it come from?” asked Ranji.

“Usually he stays in the river,” said Sheroo, who had joined them. “But all this week he’s been coming out to lie on our wicket. I don’t think he wants us to play.”

“We’ll have to get him off,” said Ranji.

“You’d better keep out of reach of his tail and jaws!”

“We’ll wait until he goes away,” said Prem.

But Nakoo showed no signs of wanting to leave. He rather liked the smooth flat stretch of ground which he had discovered. And now here were all those boys again, doing their best to disturb him.

After some time the boys began throwing pebbles at Nakoo. They had no effect, as they simply bounced off the crocodile’s thick hide. They tried mud balls and an

orange. Nakoo just twitched his tail and opened one eye, but refused to move away.

Then Prem took a ball, and bowled a fast one at the crocodile. It bounced just short of Nakoo and caught him on the snout. Startled and stung, he wriggled off the pitch and moved rapidly down the river back and into the water.

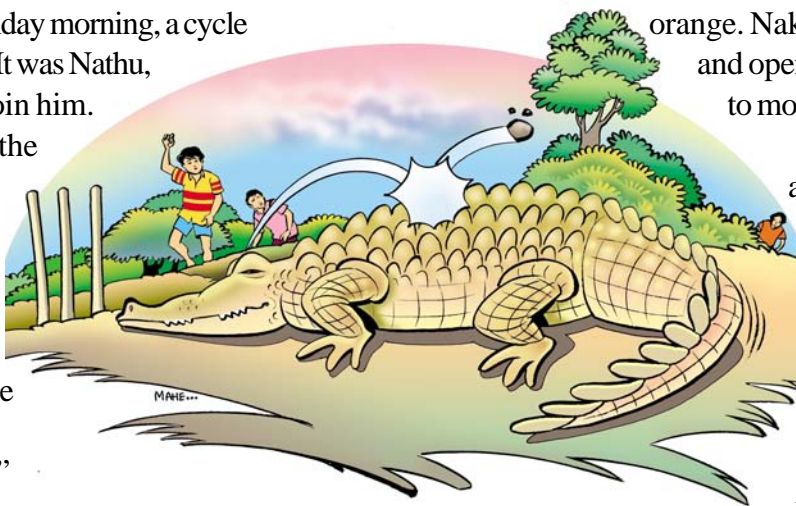
There was a mighty splash as he dived for cover. “Well bowled, Prem!” said Ranji. “That was a good ball.”

“But Nakoo will be in a bad mood after that!” warned Sheroo. “Don’t get too close to the river.”

The bank manager and the baker were the last to arrive. The scooter had given them some trouble en route. No one mentioned the crocodile, just in case the adults decided to call the off match.

After inspecting the wicket, which Nakoo had left in fair condition, Sheroo and Ranji tossed a coin. Ranji called ‘Heads!’ but it came up tails. Sheroo chose to bat first.

(To conclude)





Rana Pratap was the most independent among the rulers of Mewar. He refused to buckle to any of the persuasive tactics of Emperor Akbar that would compromise his position.

Once Emperor Akbar sent Kanwar Man Singh of Amber as his envoy to Rana Pratap, who received him with all courtesy. "Let it not be said that I failed in my duties by not receiving you properly," Rana Pratap said, with pride.

Kanwar Singh said, "There is no love lost between you and me. But I have come here on behalf of Akbar who is a just and fair emperor. If you accept his supremacy, he will not wage a war against you."

Rana Pratap, in great anger, roared, "How dare you insult me! You can tell Akbar that I shall be waiting for his army."

"Then please accept his invitation to fight at Haldighati," said Kanwar Singh.

At the pre-dawn hours of June 18, 1576, both the Mughal army and Rana Pratap waited for the opportune moment to strike. The Rana sat proudly on his handsome

An 'invitation' to fight



white Arab stallion Chetak that had been his closest ally in many battles.

The horse had been given a camouflage, a mask resembling a grotesque elephant, designed both to terrify an opponent's steed as well as to protect him from the enemy's war elephants. Pratap clasped his huge sword in one hand; the other held the ancient banner of the House of Mewar, the crimson field with the golden face of the Sun God in the centre.

With the passing of hours, it was beyond doubt that the Rajput ruler was losing the battle to the

Mughals. Though he was terribly wounded, he still kept on fighting.

Chetak, too, was wounded. All his thoughts now were to save his master. He sped hurriedly out of the battlefield to reach a place of safety for his master. Before long, the horse breathed his last.



A real scream!

How loud can you yell? How-ever much you try, you just can't beat the blue whale. Its whistle measures 188 decibels, the loudest sound produced by a living animal.

Yoked to man

Have you seen cows ploughing fields? Or bullocks pulling carts? Or horses carrying men? Man has been domesticating and using animals for ages now. It is believed that man first domesticated animals 7,000 years back!



The Heroes of Yuksam

It was the last day of school for the term. Ten year old Niraj was excited as he was going to his 'forever home' to spend a month with his grandparents. But just before he thought it was going to be a perfect holiday, he heard the teacher utter the words 'holiday homework'. "There it goes," he grumbled, "my perfect holiday! Now I'm going to have to sit doing this instead



worked night and day to save Yuksam from a very destructive plan. They were all heroes, he thought. "In our sacred land of the Rathong Chu, every person is a hero and blessed by the deity who lives on Mount Khangchendzonga," he said. "Let me tell you a story of what happened in our village and then you'll know that what I say is true."

of spending time listening to grandpa's stories about the birds and animals, like the tragopans and the Red Pandas that he encountered during his many treks on Mount Khangchendzonga."

However, the topic of the essay that he was supposed to write lifted his spirits a little. 'Heroes of our land', he said to himself, while his mind was racing through the number of story books he had read. Anyway, he would have to think of this later as he had to rush back home. His dad would drive them to their home in Yuksam, in his jeep. At 5,800 ft above sea level, Yuksam was nestled at the foot of the mountains. Through Yuksam flows the glorious Rathong river, considered sacred by the Buddhists of Sikkim, as it has 109 lakes which are the abode of local deities.

The drive from Siliguri to Yuksam took five hours. In the jeep, Niraj could never doze off like his mom did. Instead, he would watch his dad smoothly manoeuvre the sharp bends of the road. And as they got past bend after bend, the mighty Rathong Chu (*Chu* means river in Sikkimese), would appear and disappear from their sight. His thought went back to his homework. "Who's your hero, papa?" he turned in his seat to face his dad.

The question set Gyaltsen thinking. He thought of Sonam and Chukie and Pema and many others who had

"On an unusually warm day in the summer of 1993, some of us were sitting at the entrance of the village. We saw a truck full of cement bags and digging implements coming towards us. The truck driver told us that some people, who stayed far away and had never visited our village or seen our glorious Rathong Chu, had decided to build a huge wall across the river. Their idea was to stop the river from flowing and make electricity from that water. For days after that, my friends and I sat arguing and wondering. It would be good if all the homes in the village could be lit up by that electricity, but what would the construction do to our village and our Rathong Chu?

"Over the next few days, this was the only matter that was discussed in all the families in Yuksam. Some of the elders decided that this matter was important enough to be discussed and so everyone sat in the shade of the huge willow tree in the centre of the village. Lamas from the nearby *gompas* (monastery) had also walked to Yuksam for the meeting. And there, the lamas, together with our elders, made us realise that Yuksam was too special a place to be sacrificed for anything. 'The *Naysol*, our sacred book, says that the soil on which we live is blessed by Guru Rinpoche. Our sacred deities lived in these rocks, hills, trees, and lakes right here,' explained one of the frail old lamas. 'If we allow this construction in

Sikkim is a small State, in the northeast region of India and is best known for its mountainous landscape dotted with colourful prayer flags, beautiful monasteries, gushing rivers, and a huge variety of exotic plant and animal life.

This story is based on the struggle that took place in Sikkim, to save the Rathong Chu valley from the hydro-electric project that was proposed to be built at Yuksam. One wonders why this project was planned when the people of Yuksam did not want it! Does anyone have a right to take away or do things to somebody else's home?

Today, 169 large hydro-electric projects are being proposed in the entire northeastern region of the country that comprises the eight States of Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. For those in the region, who are working to protect their homes, trees and rivers that may be destroyed by these projects, the Rathong Chu story is an inspiration.

the village, the trees along Rathong Chu will be cut down and the rocks will be broken up to build the wall. The birds and the butterflies, whom we share this land with, will fly far away and our deities will leave, too. We will never be happy after that.' he said in a low, sad voice."

Niraj, who was following this story with rapt attention, quickly added, "Grandpa did tell me last year that some people had once tried to dump mud into the Kathok

lake. Did nobody ever tell them that grandpa and so many others prayed to the deity at the lake?"

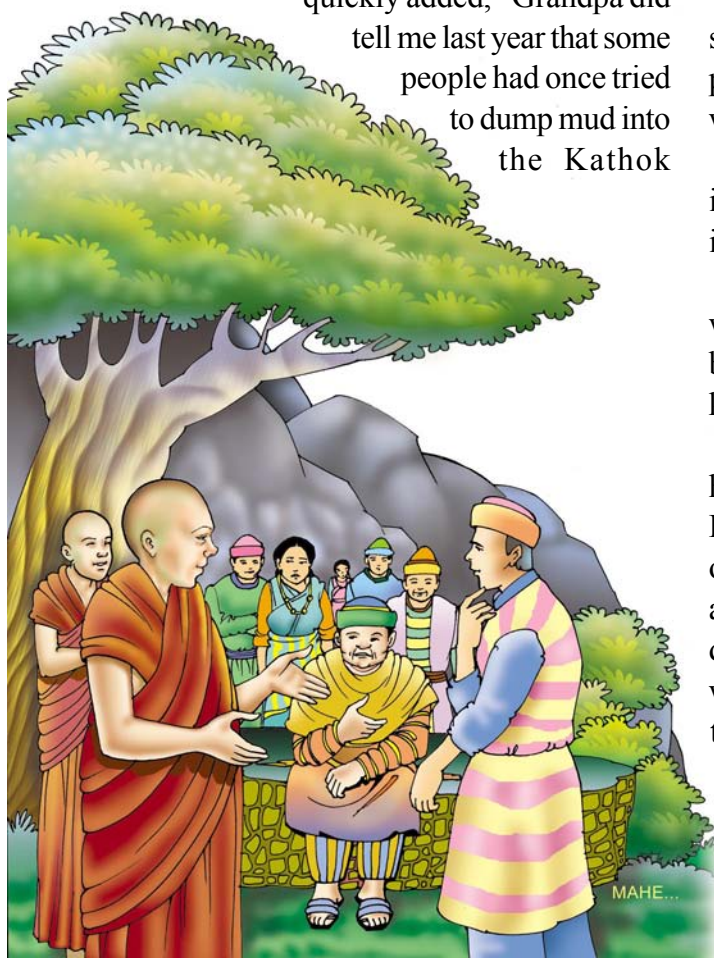
"Yes, it was all part of the same construction plan," said Gyalsten, "and nobody bothered to ask us before doing it! Do you also remember the Bum Chu ritual that grandpa took you to last year?"

"Of course," said Niraj. "He let me sit on his shoulder so that I would get a full view of the huge number of people who had gathered at our monastery. Everyone wanted to drink a drop of water from the special vase."

"The vase contains holy water. Every year the vase is opened and a cup of pure water from the Rathong Chu is added," explained Gyalsten.

"Grandpa told me that once I took a drop of this water, I would never have any illness as I would be blessed by our Guru Padmasambhava," added Niraj very knowledgeably.

Gyalsten said a silent 'thank you' to his father for having taught Niraj about their traditions and their faith. He continued with his story. "Having heard the lamas and our elders at that meeting, we decided that we would not allow bulldozers and dynamite to trample, dig up and destroy our land. We would not drive away the deities who reside in the lakes of the Rathong Chu by allowing the construction on the river to begin. We then needed to convey our decision to those who had planned the project. All of us from the village, led by the lamas from all over Sikkim, marched to Gangtok. It was a sight to watch! We walked the streets beating drums, while the lamas rang their cymbals. Our banners conveyed our



message loud and clear. Never before had people seen so many lamas on the street. People joined us along the way and shared our joy and pride at having decided what was best for our land and our people.

“Uncle Pema, Uncle Sonam, and Auntie Chukie wrote endless number of letters to people telling them what would go wrong if the wall was built. Had it not been for them, neither we nor anyone outside of Sikkim would have known about the project early enough to do something to prevent it.

“In 1997, Uncle Pema brought us the news that the project would not come to Yuksam.” Gyaltzen stopped for a moment, winked at Niraj and asked, “Now, don’t

you think we are all heroes?” Niraj grinned from ear to ear and his cherub face was bright and happy. He had found a true story of heroes to tell his class.

As the jeep revved up to climb the steep mountain road, Niraj thought of what all the heroes of Yuksam had managed to save. The colourful pheasants and butterflies, the sprawling cardamom fields on the hill slopes, the old but smooth-moving wooden watermills, the million orchids on the trees... Yuksam was forever home to them all.

- Manju Menon

Courtesy: Kalpavriksh and the National Biodiversity and Strategic Action Plan

When they were young...

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

For a person born and brought up in comfort, it is difficult to understand fully the sufferings of the poor. When faced with the sight of penury, what do we do? Close our eyes to it and move on with our lives, perhaps? But there was once a boy who deliberately adopted the life of his less fortunate friends, in order to be like them in every sense. No wonder that he should, in later years, become famous as a great humanitarian.

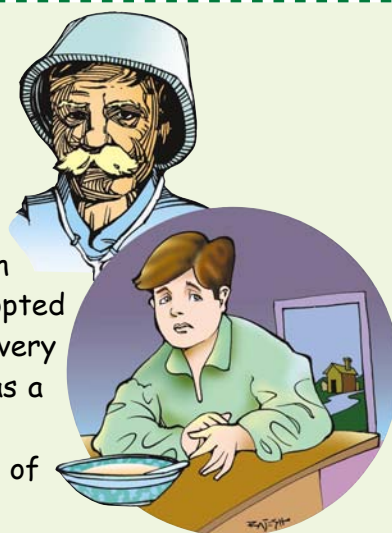
The boy, Albert, was the son of a German village pastor. Most of the time, he could be seen with his best friend, George Nitschelm.

One evening, as they were returning from school, George challenged Albert for a fight and Albert accepted. Ultimately Albert won and triumphantly asked, “What do you say now?”

“You win!” gasped George. “But if I got good broth for supper twice a week like you do, I bet you wouldn’t have won.”

Without saying a word, Albert stood up, picked up his satchel and walked off home, leaving George staring after him. That evening, there was broth for supper. Usually Albert had a voracious appetite, but that day, much to the family’s astonishment, he did not touch the broth. As he looked at the broth, his friend’s words echoed in his ears and he felt sick. Pushing his plate aside, he excused himself from the table. Up in his room, he came to a momentous decision - he would not be different from his poorer friends any more!

From then on, he determinedly stuck to his resolve. In winter he would refuse to wear an overcoat, donning only the ordinary woollens that the other boys wore. All his parents’ pleas, threats and scoldings failed to move him. The boy was none other than Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the famous missionary who rejected a brilliant musical career to follow his dream of serving the needy. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.





Send your questions to :
Ask Away,
Chandamama India Ltd.
No.82 Defence Officers' Colony,
Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097 or
e-mail to askaway@chandamama.org.
Prof. Manoj Das will answer your queries.

Q *I have a very personal question to ask. I do not know if it would fall into the scheme of Ask Away. Somehow I suspect that though the question is personal, there are probably many among the readers of Chandamama, this sweet and dear magazine, who have the same feeling. They could probably benefit from your answer. Now to the question: I am haunted by a feeling that our school system is obliging us to learn a lot of things, a lot of topics, that are useless. I feel a sort of revolt. What do I do?*

- Sumant Garg, Panaji (Goa)

A Your suspicion that there are many who share your feeling is not incorrect. Several educationists are of the opinion that the present system of education must change. But that is a very big issue. Let us hope that the change will one day take place. However, by then your school days would have come to an end. It will not be practical for me to say anything on that issue in a brief answer. Let me only tell you *what should be your attitude*.

We must be prepared to face the grim fact that many things in our life will not be pleasant. At this stage of your life, if you can consciously bear with such subjects that are unpleasant to you, if you make a calm habit of it, that itself will be a great education, a very practical help to you later in life.

Secondly, however unpleasant a subject may be, it cannot be without any value. Sometimes what appears to us as useless at a given moment may prove to be of great use – if not directly, indirectly – some day in the future. All the subjects in the world are linked to one

another. Some knowledge of one subject can play a role in our appreciating another subject which matters to us. We must remember that the whole world is our school. What we learn at school is only a small part of the experiences we are gathering from all around us – or we can gather if we are keen enough. A boy or girl of your age is at the most receptive phase of life.

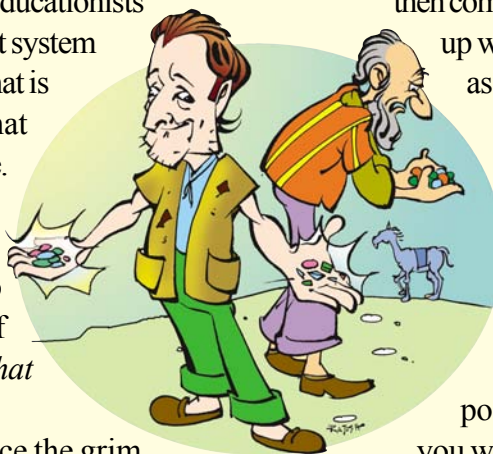
The experiences (I am only using a broader term to mean education) you will have now will prove to be invaluable when you grow up. Let me tell you an anecdote. It was a moonlit night. Some riders were passing through an unknown land. Suddenly a voice asked them to stop. Surprised, they stopped. The voice then commanded them to dismount and pick up whatever was there on the ground – as much as they liked.

The riders got off their horses. There was nothing on the ground except pebbles. They reluctantly picked small quantities of them – because they could not disregard the mysterious voice.

‘Put the pebbles in your pockets and ride on. In the morning you will be happy and sorry at the same time,’ was the intriguing announcement.

In the morning the riders brought out their collections from their pockets and, to their amazement, saw that they had turned into precious gems. They were happy because of the windfall, but they were also sorry because they had not picked up more!

Aspire and be alert. Everything you learn today may prove useful in the future. Learn enough – not from the textbooks but from the world around you – so that you will not have to be sorry.





A folk tale from Scotland

HOW THE LAND WAS LEVELLED

Scotland is a breathtakingly beautiful country. It is divided into two regions – the Lowlands of the south and the Highlands of the north.

The Highlands are a feast for the eye, no doubt. There are imposing mountains and, sandwiched between them, little valleys known as glens. There are great blue lakes known as lochs. Overall, the Highlands present a picture of rugged grandeur. It is evident that this is a fierce land that refuses to be tamed. Nature still reigns supreme in all her glory.

However, there is one exception. If you were to walk inland from the shores of Loch Shiel, you would reach a little green glen tucked away between the mountain folds. This glen would take you by surprise. How could it be so level and smooth, when all the glens in the neighbourhood are rough and strewn with grey rocks? Ah, therein hangs a tale – and an interesting one at that!

Many, many years ago, this little glen, too, like all its neighbours, was a bleak, barren place, with huge boulders blocking every path, and jagged stones strewn over every inch of land, so that you could scarcely walk on it, leave alone cultivate it! Naturally, the people living here were poor, as there was little soil to grow any crops. Their cattle, too, were perpetually half-starved, as they had only the poorest pastures to feed on. Thus they were eeking out a miserable existence.

Half-way down the glen, there was a little house hidden against the hill-side, and in it lived a very wise old man. He was the *seanchaidh* or story-teller. It was said

that he knew everything, and had a solution to every problem.

One day, the young men of the glen held a meeting, and decided that enough was enough. They could not possibly carry on this miserable existence any longer. It was time they moved to another, more friendly place – a place where the hills and land were smooth. But where would they find such a place?

“Let’s ask the *seanchaidh*!” someone suggested, and everybody agreed. They trooped downhill to present their problem to him.

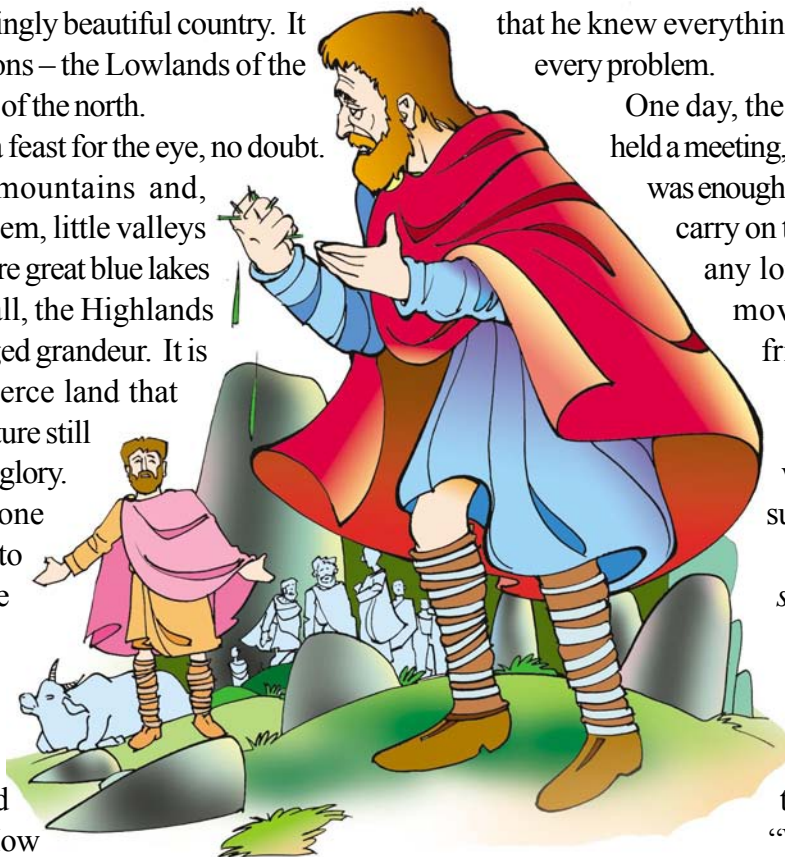
“We are the poorest of our race,” they said, “and it is not for want of efforts. But our glen is small, and choked with huge rocks fallen from the mountains. We wish to go away. Can you tell us of a place where we can live – where the hills are kind and the ground easily tilled?”

The *seanchaidh* pondered for a while. Then he bent to loosen the earth and take a handful of soil. “There is no finer soil than in our glen,” he said.

“That may be true,” agreed the young men. “But it would need superhuman strength to clear away all the rocks. It’s beyond us!”

“Hmm...” said the *seanchaidh* thoughtfully. “Let me see if I can solve your problem!”

In those days, giants used to live on the earth. Two of them – great surly creatures – lived on a neighbouring



mountain. They were always quarrelling among themselves as to which of them was stronger. That day, the *seanchaidh* climbed high up to the top of the mountain to find them.

“It’s foolish of you to keep on quarrelling – you’ll never settle your dispute this way!” he declared to the giants. “I’m only an old man, but I believe I can settle it once and for all. Come down into the glen tomorrow, and I’ll set you a task to prove your strength, so that everyone may see which one of you is the mightier giant!”

The next morning, the mountains resounded with the thunderous steps of the two giants as they met in the glen. The *seanchaidh* and all the people of the glen were there to welcome them.

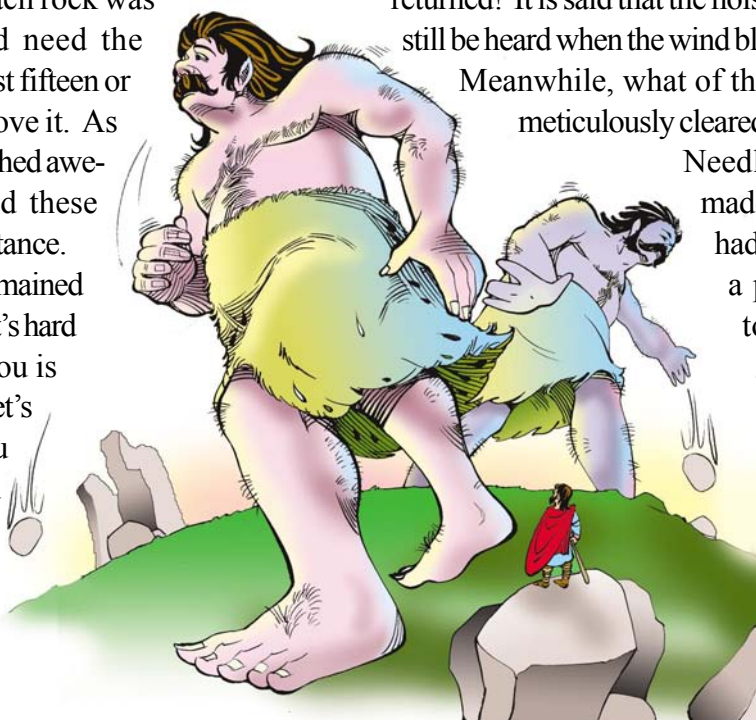
“Now,” said the *seanchaidh*, “let us see how far each of you can throw a small stone. Can you throw it to that mountain-top?” He indicated the distant peak.

Both giants laughed. They bent and lifted two huge rocks as easily as a man would lift a pebble from the beach, and flung them into the mountains, far out of sight.

“I must admit that both of you did really well – indeed, so well that it’s difficult to judge who’s the better thrower. So, why don’t you try it again?” suggested the old man and added, “But this time, let the stones be bigger!”

The giants needed no second urging. They lifted two enormous rocks. Each rock was so heavy that it would need the combined labour of at least fifteen or twenty men merely to move it. As the people of the glen watched awe-struck, the giants tossed these rocks casually into the distance.

But the *seanchaidh* remained unmoved. “With this test, it’s hard to determine which of you is stronger,” he declared. “Let’s try it this way. Don’t you see the huge rocks and boulders scattered over the ground? Let’s see how many rocks each can throw first with his left hand, then with his right.”



Instantly the giants dived down to collect rocks. They then began hurling them far into the air and over the mountains with their left hands. Onward they went, striding the length and breadth of the glen, tearing boulders from the earth. Thunderous noises arose as the boulders flew over the mountains.

When their left hands began to ache, the giants resorted to using their right hands. But they continued the contest until sundown. By then, there was hardly one rock to be seen anywhere. And as for the giants, they were so weary they could hardly stand!

Now the *seanchaidh* said, “We still cannot say who’s stronger, as we have lost count of what has been thrown! Therefore now, you must go and look for the rock that has been thrown farthest. And when you find it, bring it back to us, and we shall see who can repeat the feat. Only then can we know which of you is mightier.”

Still quarrelling fiercely among themselves, the stupid giants went off in search of the rock that had been thrown the farthest. To the last they never realised how their strength had been utilised by the clever *seanchaidh* to his own ends!

Don’t be surprised if you know that the giants are still continuing their search to this day, for, they’ve never returned! It is said that the noise of their quarrelling can still be heard when the wind blows in the right direction.

Meanwhile, what of the glen that had been so meticulously cleared of all the obstructions?

Needless to say, the people made haste to till the soil that had been handed to them on a platter, so to say. And today – thanks to the old *seanchaidh*’s resourcefulness – there are no finer crops growing anywhere in the Scottish Highlands, than in the little green glen by Loch Shiel.

**- Retold by
Rajee Raman**



The State of Haryana has been the cradle of Indian culture and civilization. The land has a great history that dates back to the Vedic times. Haryana was also the home of the legendary Bharata dynasty. The State is replete with many myths, legends, and Vedic references. It is said that Lord Brahma did penance here and then created the universe. It was also here that Sage Veda Vyasa wrote the great epic, the Mahabharata. It was again here at Kurukshetra that Lord Krishna had his dialogue with Arjuna that came to be called, the Bhagawad Gita.

Haryana was formed on November 1, 1966. Its area extends to 44,000 sq km. The State's population is 21,082,989.

Haryana is surrounded by Uttar Pradesh and Delhi in the east, Punjab in the west, Himachal Pradesh in the north, and Rajasthan in the south. The Shivalik and the Aravalli hills are the main geographical features of the State. The Yamuna and Ghaggar are the chief rivers of the State. The mythical Saraswati is believed to have flowed through Haryana.

Chandigarh is the capital of the State, and Hindi is the main language. Punjabi, Urdu, and some local dialects like Haryanvi are also spoken here.

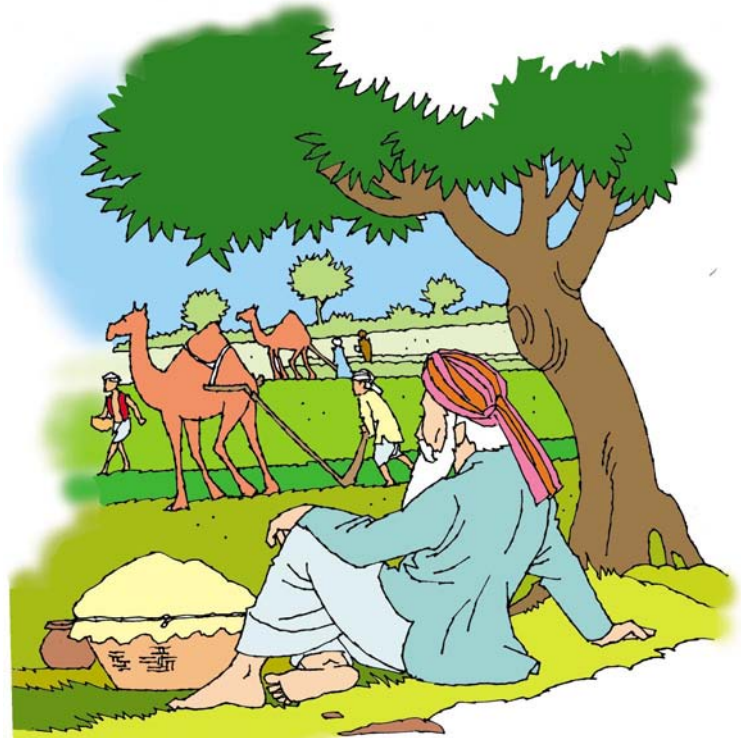
Known as the gateway to North India, Haryana is also a popular tourist destination. Kurukshetra, the ancient centre of Aryan civilization is the most sought after place in Haryana.

Fishing out ill luck

In the fertile lands of Haryana there lived a prosperous family of *khetehar*. The old wise farmer had *saat* sons. Six of them were married, while the seventh was just a young lad. All of them worked hard, shared the fruits of their labour and lived a happy life. Their fields sprawled all over the village and rippled with *sunehra* wheat almost throughout the year.

Life was smooth and easy till one fateful morning when the old farmer woke up to find that he had gone blind in both eyes. As this happened all of a sudden, he was horrified and so were all his family members. They brought in various kinds of doctors – *hakims*, *vaid*s, medicine men, and others – but no one knew what to do.

And, then, one day a fakir wandered into the village. The farmer's son met the stranger in the marketplace and brought him home to see his father. The fakir looked at the old man and said, "Ah! There has been some evil at work. The only way to restore his eyesight is to touch his eyes with the eye of the big golden



machali that lives in the ocean beyond the land of Bengal.”

But when the farmer turned to his eldest son for help, the man backed away saying, “I’m a family man. I’ve my wife and two children to think of. How can I go away on such a perilous journey? Who knows what may not happen on the way?”

The farmer then appealed to his other sons for help. The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth sons made similar excuses as the first. In sheer despair, the old man now turned to his youngest boy. He was not married and, besides, he was very fond of his old father. So, he left in search of the golden fish immediately.

He walked swiftly and with determination, and after crossing many a forest and several strange kingdoms, he reached the ocean beyond the land of Bengal. He borrowed a boat and sailed in search of the golden fish. He dropped his net and waited and waited and at last one day, he was lucky!

The golden fish fell into his trap! When he tried to haul it in, it spoke to him with tears in its eyes. “Don’t catch me!” it said. “What harm have I done to you?”

Then the boy explained, “A fakir has said that only



the touch of your eyes can cure my father of his blindness. So I’ve no choice but to catch you and take you home.”

Then the golden fish said, “Is that all? Well, I know how your father can be cured of his blindness without the touch of my eyes. Bring some sand from the shore and let my eyes touch it. Take that sand to your father and let the sand touch his eyes. And he will regain his sight.”

“Well, I shall do as you say. But if my father does not get back his sight, I won’t spare your life. This is not a threat. This is just an advice that you must honour your words.”

The fish thanked him, “I’ll pray for your father’s health. Remember me anytime and I will come to your help.”

The son then took the *reth* from the shore, had it touched by the fish’s eyes, and went home hurriedly to his old father. As soon as he touched his father’s eyelids with the sand, his sight was restored. He could see the smiling face of the brave young son. He was very happy.

The other six sons of the farmer rushed to their father as soon as they heard the news. They could not believe their ears. “How could our brother come back



traditional dress of kurta, dhoti, and colourful turbans. The dance is performed to the beat of the drum or the Dhamal.

Jhumar is another popular folk dance. It is performed exclusively by the womenfolk to the beat of the dholak. The dance gets its name from the ornament called Jhumar, worn by married women on their forehead.

Some of the other folk dances are Loor, Ras Leela, Gugga, Chhati, and Phag.

Folk Dances

The folk dances of Haryana are full of verve and action. There are dances for each occasion. The most popular among them is the Dhamal or Daf. It is performed mostly when the crops are ready for harvest and before the Holi festival. This is generally performed by men on open grounds wearing their



successfully? It was such a *mushkil* task,” asked the brothers amongst themselves.

They were jealous of their youngest brother. They were bothered by the thought that he might become the sole heir to their father’s vast property. They plotted against him.

The eldest brother came forward and said, “We must thank God. You’ve successfully managed to restore our father’s eyesight. But, father, where are the eyes of the fish that you needed? All he did was, place some sand on your eyelids. It could also be a mere coincidence that your eyesight has been restored.”

“What if the sand harms your eyes later?” quipped in another son.

“He should have brought the eyes of the fish. He has deceived all of us!” thundered a third son.

Their clever arguments bore fruit. The youngest son was forced to leave the house. He was accused of cheating his father.

The youngest son left the house and went around aimlessly. He had nowhere to go. One day, as he was passing through a forest he heard a cry. It was that of a *geedhad*.

“Kind sir, please save me. I’m being chased by *shikaris*. In return, I promise to help you whenever a need arises,” pleaded the jackal, who was panting.

The youngest son took pity on the jackal. “Please lie low in the ditch there. I’ll cover it with dry leaves and twigs. I shall call out when the hunters leave and then you can come out.”

The jackal liked the idea. He lay in the ditch. The hunters came that way and saw the youngest son. They approached him. “Did you see any jackal go this way?”

“Jackal? What’s a jackal? I’ve never seen one,” he said pokerfaced.

The hunters lost their patience, “This fool doesn’t even know a jackal. Let’s not waste any more time. Let’s go further down and see if we can catch the jackal.”

After the hunters had left, the youngest son called the jackal out of the pit. The jackal thanked him. “Think of me whenever you’re in trouble. I’ll be there to help you.”

“Don’t worry! I’m not in trouble. Leave before the hunters come back,” he said smilingly and proceeded deep into the forest.

At the end of the forest was a kingdom. The city was a strange one. The princess there had a magic *ainaa*. She could see everything in the mirror. She had claimed that if any one could avoid his reflection falling on the mirror, she would marry him. However, if he failed, and if he was traced, he would be beheaded.

The young man saw skulls and *hadiyaan* of many people all around the palace. The place was filled with cries of youths being beheaded. But that did not deter him. He met the princess.

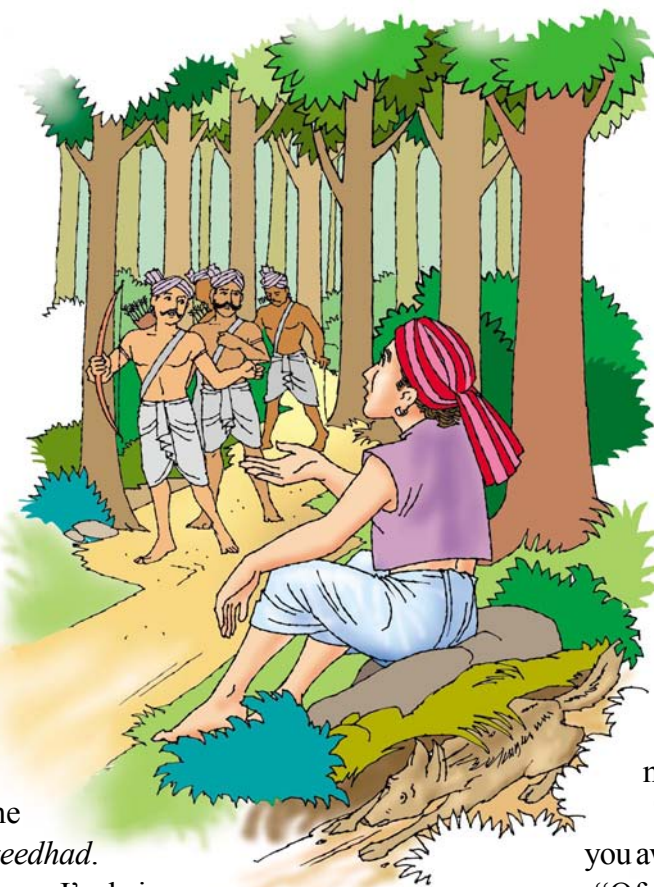
The princess demanded, “Are you aware of the conditions?”

“Of course, I’m prepared for the consequences,” he replied.

“All right, hide yourself tonight. And if I locate you by tomorrow morning, your head...” the princess left the sentence hanging, implying he would be dead by the morning.

At night, the young man went to the seashore. There he called out the golden fish and narrated his problem and asked for help.

“Oh! That’s no problem. I know the right place for you to hide. I’ll conceal you in my *pet* and go deep into



Glossary

Khetehar: farmer

Saat: seven

Sunehra: golden

Machali: fish

Reth: sand

Mushkil: difficult

Geedhad: jackal

Shikaris: hunters

Ainaa: mirror

Hadiyaan: bones

Pet: stomach

Bistar: bed

Shaadi: wedding



the ocean. No one can locate you there,” said the fish.

Meanwhile, the princess took the mirror and turned it in all directions. After some time she traced him. In the morning when the young man met her, she described the exact location where he had stayed. She then said, “You appear to be an interesting person. I’ll give you another chance before beheading you.”

This time the young man went to the forest and asked the jackal for help. “Don’t worry, I’ll do my best,” assured the jackal.

The jackal then called a meeting of all his friends. They decided to dig a tunnel from the forest to the palace, till the princess’s *bistar* and make the young man hide there.

The plan was executed. The young man went and hid beneath the princess’s bed.

The princess woke up and took up the mirror in her hand. She turned it in all directions except beneath her bed. And to her astonishment, she could not trace the young man. She kept on trying but in vain.

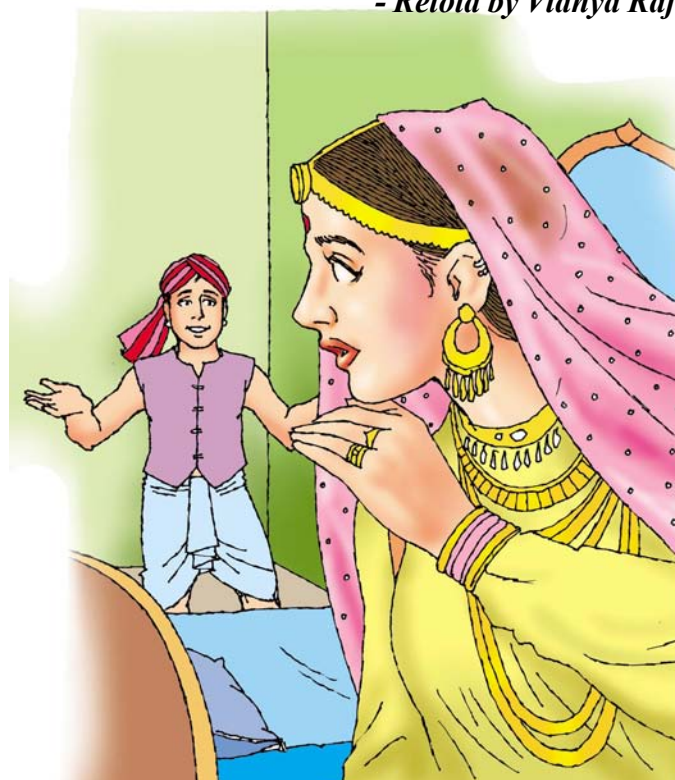
Now she knew that she would have to keep her word and marry him. She went up to the window and started

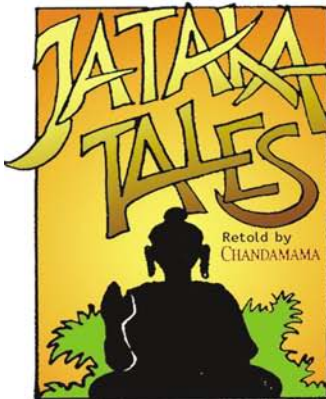
looking out for him. She did not have to wait for long before he appeared. She ran out and greeted him, “Young man! I’ve lost the game. You’ve won!”

Soon after their *shaadi*, they started for the young man’s village. They found that the old farmer still had his sight. The brothers repented their behaviour and welcomed their brother and his royal bride warmly. “Please forgive us, dear brother. We are extremely sorry for our actions.”

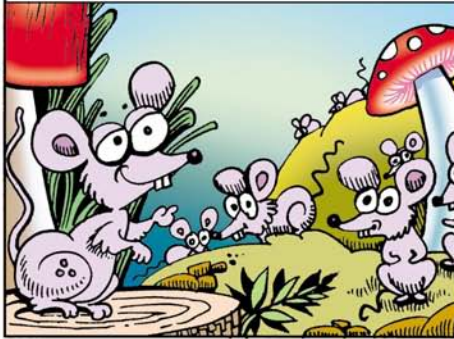
The family was united once again. The young man then took his father along with him to his kingdom. The brothers were left to fend for themselves!

- Retold by Vidhya Raj



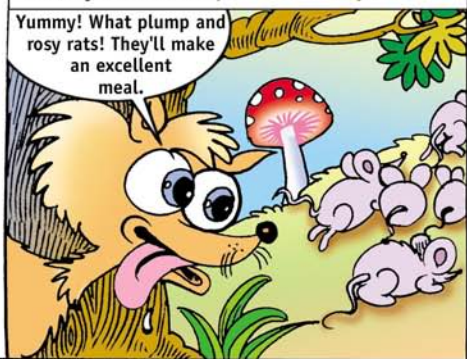


Deep in a forest lived hundreds of rats, happily. Their leader was a clever rat called Neta.



Once, a jackal called Kapali came to the forest.

Yummy! What plump and rosy rats! They'll make an excellent meal.



First I shall make friends with them. Then, they won't be afraid of me.



He thought of a plan. He observed the path the rats took every day while hunting for food.



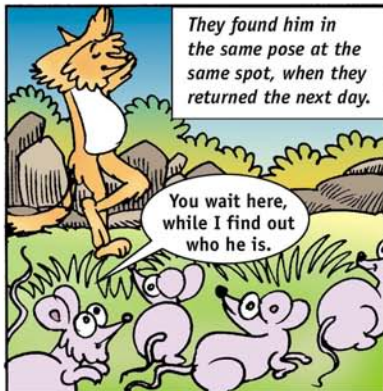
He selected a spot in their route and stood on one leg facing the east.



Hey! Who is this new guy?

The rats saw him as they went foraging for food. But they did not try to go near him.

They found him in the same pose at the same spot, when they returned the next day.



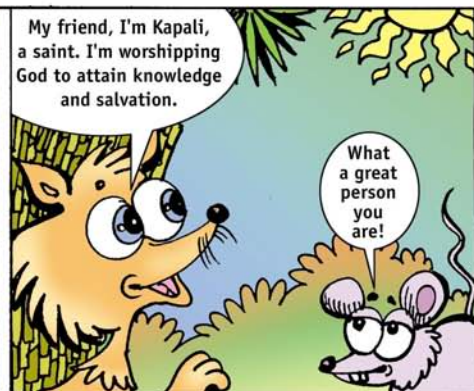
You wait here, while I find out who he is.

Neta went up to the stranger.



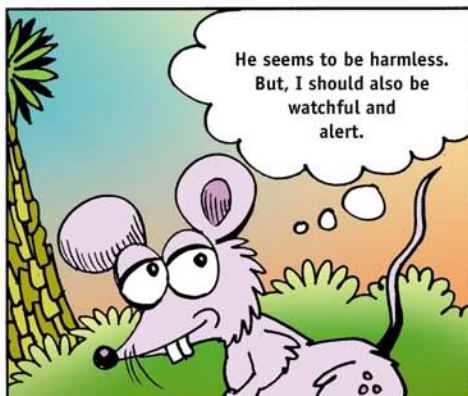
Sir, who are you and what are you doing here?

My friend, I'm Kapali, a saint. I'm worshipping God to attain knowledge and salvation.



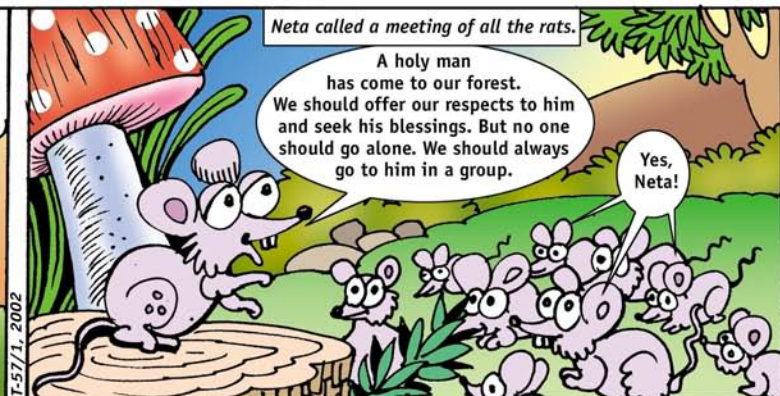
What a great person you are!

He seems to be harmless. But, I should also be watchful and alert.

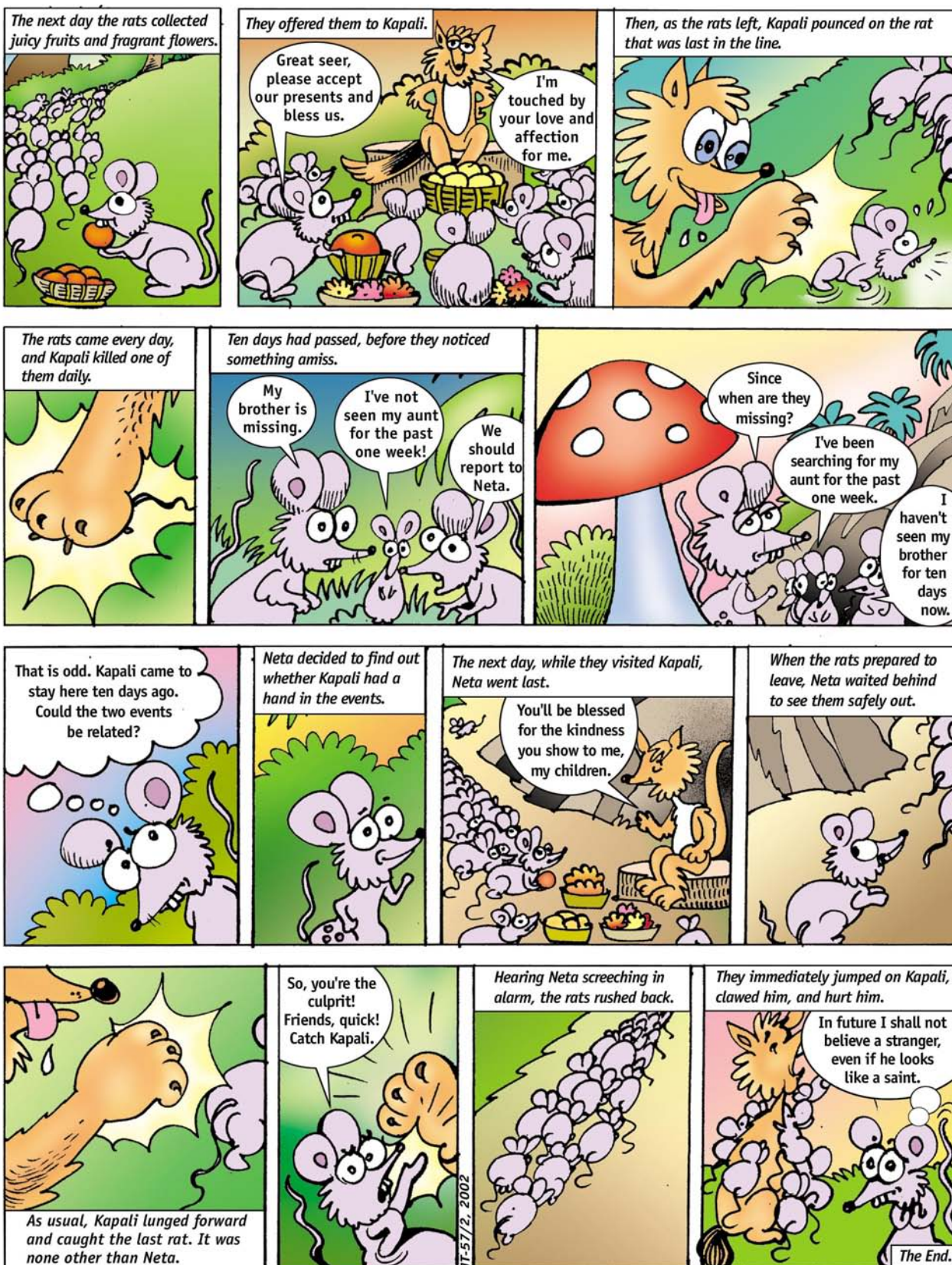


Neta called a meeting of all the rats.

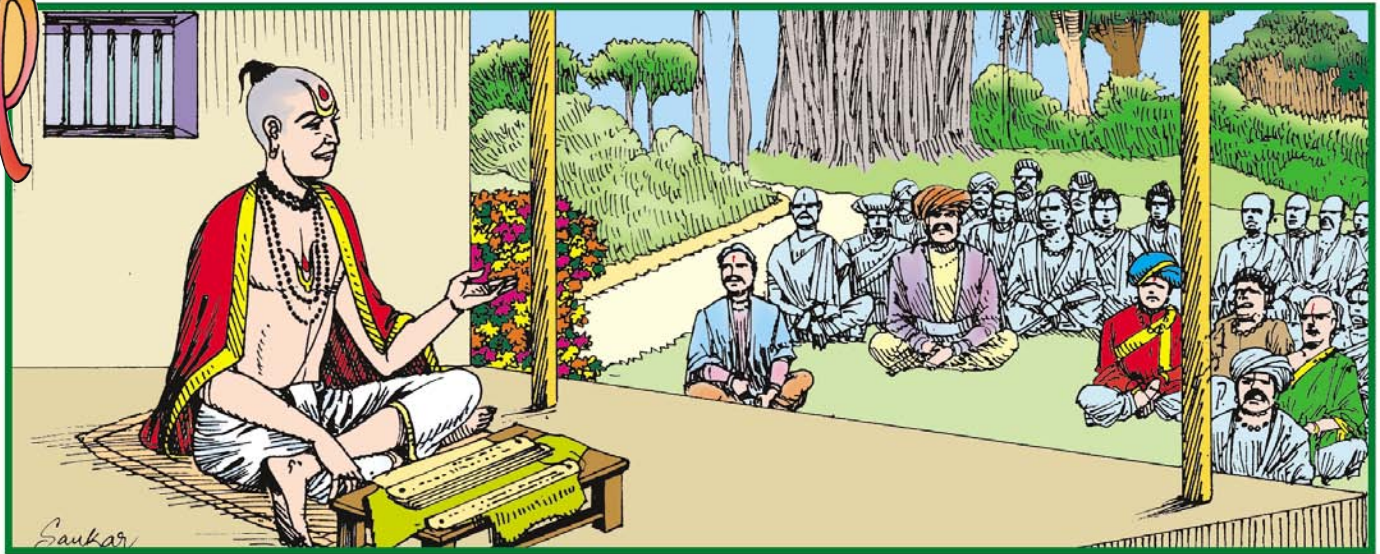
A holy man has come to our forest. We should offer our respects to him and seek his blessings. But no one should go alone. We should always go to him in a group.



Yes, Neta!



No escape for the burglar



Tulsi Das, the great sage and poet, had a small Ashram in Varanasi. While he had had a few disciples with him who served him faithfully, he devoted most of his time to composing the immortal epic, *Sri Ramcharitmanas* or the story of Rama. His poetry was charming. As he wrote, he also sang the lines in a low voice. It was difficult for anyone who heard the lyrical verses to leave the place. Several of the sage's admirers would sit outside his mud hut and listen to his chanting of the verses for hours.

Not far from the Ashram of Tulsi Das camped Tima the burglar. He had been caught by the city guards more than once for his crimes and punished, too. Out of jail, he would continue to indulge in his wicked habit of thieving.

Tima was surprised to observe that the gates of the Ashram as well as all the doors of the rooms always remained open. It was too difficult for him to check his curiosity. Once when some devotees entered the Ashram for paying their respects to the sage, he followed them. Some of the devotees were merchants who had come to the city with money. But as they relaxed in the Ashram, they would hardly remember what they carried with them. They just left their bags in a corner of the sage's hut and went and sat listening to the his recitations.

Tima sat down behind them, his eyes fixed on the bags of the merchants. But he did not know when his

attention, too, had gone over to the sage's words. The lyrics he read out were so enthralling! Before long Tima forgot for what he had entered the Ashram.

Tima visited the Ashram again the next day and then it became a habit with him to do so. He became a familiar figure for the inmates of the Ashram. Everybody took him to be a sincere devotee of Lord Rama whom the sage adored, and a lover of the sage's poetry. Tima, however, was waiting for a chance to decamp with some wealth.

One afternoon he was overjoyed when he saw a Seth who came from Sarnath, a nearby town, spend some time with the sage. Tima understood from the talk the Seth had with the others in the Ashram that he had come to buy some costly items, but he proposed to attend a festival in the evening at the Shiva temple and pass the night at the Ashram.

For Tima it was a golden opportunity. Once before he had been thrashed by the Seth's men while trying to steal something from his mansion in Sarnath. There was, of course, no question of the Seth recognizing him. He could very well slip away picking up the Seth's belongings at night.

To his greater joy, he saw not only the Seth but all the inmates of the Ashram, too, leaving for the festival

soon after nightfall. He found himself all alone, the sage excepting, in the whole Ashram. He could not believe his luck.

But, to ensure that he could not be suspected, he stood before the sage's room. The sage looked at him, smiling, and asked, "Do you wish to tell me something?"

"Well, Sir, I am also leaving for home. But there is nobody in the Ashram," he said. "You're alone."

"Who said there is nobody in the Ashram? Don't worry, you may go, my son!"

"I tell you, Sir, there is nobody and all the doors are left open, unguarded," rejoined Tima.

"Who said all the doors are unguarded?" said the sage and he went back to his palm leaves.

Amused, Tima tarried for a moment. It was a moonlit night. Slowly he picked up the Seth's bag and advanced towards one of the doors.

But what was that he saw? There was someone, armed with a bow and a quiver, strolling in front of the door! Maybe, thought Tima, the fellow was an actor returning from the festival, waiting for his companions. Tima tried to sneak through the other door. Lo and behold, his eyes met with the same sight. The young man moving about slowly had a wonderful look about him.

It was difficult for Tima to turn his eyes away from him. But he must escape as soon as soon as possible, before the Seth and his companions came back from the temple!

He headed for the third exit. But the vigilant young man seems to have anticipated his move! He was there, too! Never mind, thought Tima, there was a fourth exit. He hurried towards it. But the dazzling figure was there, too.

"What's the matter with you? Why are you approaching one door after another?"

It was the sage who put the question to him. Something strange came over Tima. He fell down, senseless. The sage lifted him up and revived him.

"Sir, what is this I saw? Who is the strange man guarding your Ashram?"

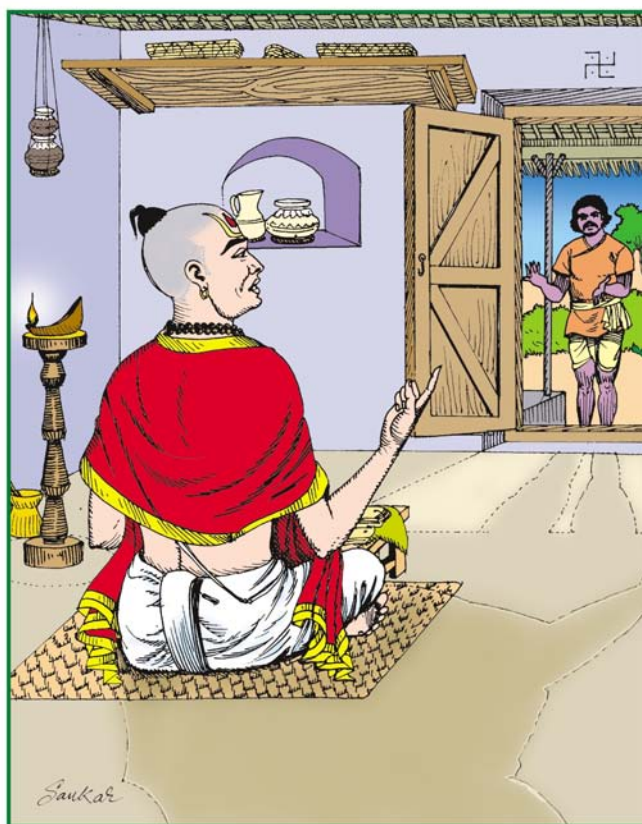
"Why strange, my son? Is he not very close to you - there seated right in your heart? He is Rama, of course!"

Tima gave out a cry and fell at the sage's feet. "Pardon me, O great soul, pardon this sinner," he whimpered out.

"My child, you're no longer a sinner. You're among the blessed ones, for you had the sublime vision of Rama," said the sage.

Tima remained with the sage - a faithful servant ever.

- By Viswvasu



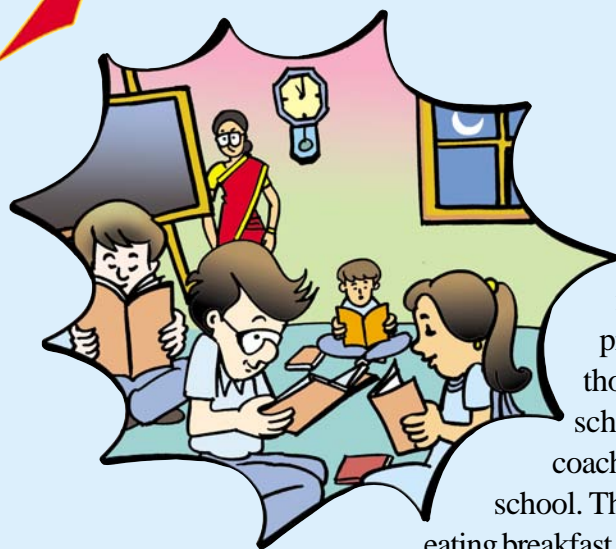
Startling Stats!

Per capita availability of water in India in terms of cubic metres a year, in 1947: 5,000

Estimated per capita availability of water in India in terms of cubic metres a year, in 2025: 1,500



Newsflash



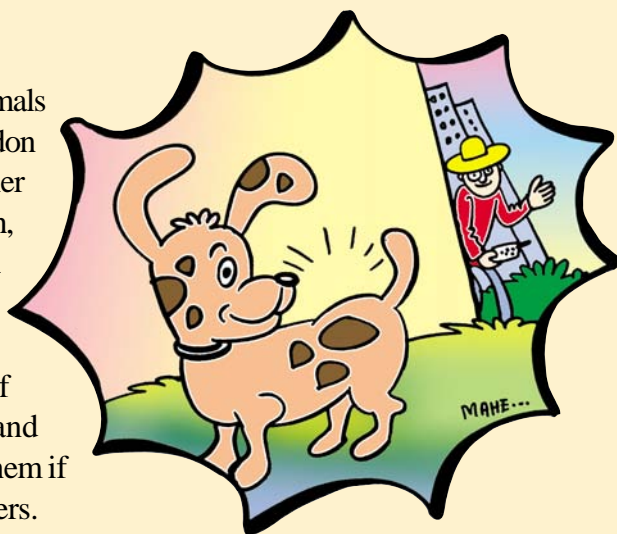
'Homing' in school

A Government-run high school in Kerala - in Sree-kantapuram - very much wished to improve the performance of its 10th Standard students in their final exam. They were not given any study leave, as the school was not sure how profitably that facility would be made use of. So, the school thought of a novel experiment. The students went home after school hours, but came back by 7 p.m. to be given individual coaching. The classes went on till 11 and the children slept in the school. They woke up early to attend classes from 4.30 to 6.30. After eating breakfast provided by the Parent Teacher Association, they went home for a wash and a change of dress and returned at 9 to attend regular classes. Six teachers stayed with the children in the night. The students brought their dinner from home. The 'resident' teachers prepared light tea or coffee which the children could ask for to ward off sleep - probably a habit developed in their homes! The students who made the school their home for the night were mostly those who could not clear the Model exam conducted in January - February. Now that the exam is over, the school - not to speak of the students, parents, and teachers - is anxiously waiting for the results.

A private school in Perumpadav, also in Kerala, undertook a similar exercise with a slight difference. When nearly 160 boys went back to their school for the night, with five teachers to look after them, groups of women teachers visited the homes of girl students every evening, spending some two to three hours with their wards, clearing their doubts. Experiments worth emulating!

And now e-care

This is for all pets reared in homes in Singapore. The Animals and Birds Act has been amended, making it a crime to abandon pets. It has been found that on an average, 19,000 pets either run away, are missing, or are abandoned annually. Henceforth, all pets in the island nation will have micro-chips inserted under their skin, so that they can be easily traced and, if it is found that they have been abandoned, action can be taken against the owners. The micro-chips are of the size of a rice grain. Micro-chipping, it is claimed, is the safest and surest method to identify animals and birds and to trace them if they are missing, so that they can be restored to their owners.



Spa for dogs

Owners of dogs in Tokyo are very particular that their pets do not grow overweight! Some enterprising people have come to their help, by opening health spas for dogs. The facilities include treadmill and even Jacuzzis. After running on the treadmill, the animals enjoy a long soak in a bubbling Jacuzzi, which gives them a therapeutic bath. This is followed by a bath in fragrant water after which oils of tea leaves and cypress are applied. True, every dog has its day!



A book in 12 hours flat!

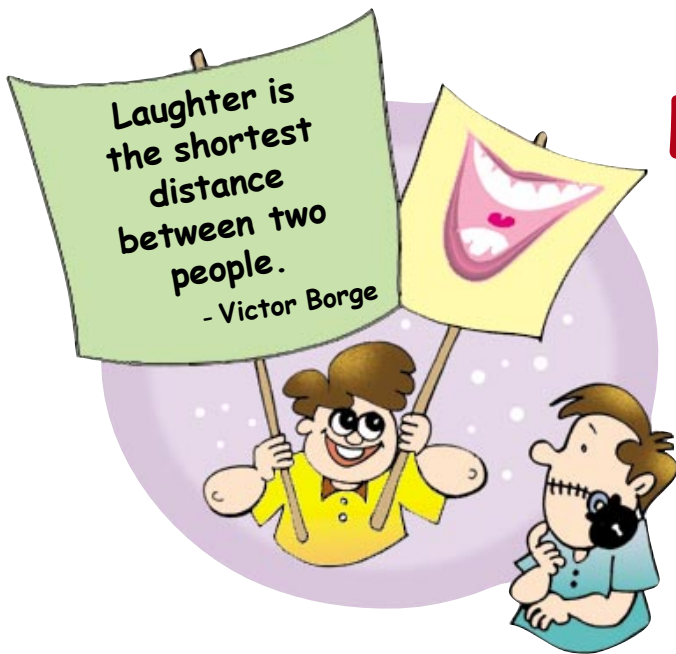


On April 23, which is World Book Day, a German publishing firm created history. At 7.45 a.m., 40 authors were given a topic; 12 hours later, at 7.45 p.m. copies of the 'book' reached 10 cities for sale and distribution. In those 12 hours, the book was written, composed, printed, and bound! Inclusive of the Foreword, the book runs into 100 pages. Stiftung Lesen, the foundation behind this venture, wants to improve the reading habit among people, and does not care much for a world record.

Thief vs. thief



A habitual thief wanted to mend his ways, but felt that unless he was punished, he would not reform himself! So, he went and filed a case against himself. This 40-year-old repentant thief hails from Banja-Luka, in Bosnia. He had been thieving for years but got disgusted when the shopkeepers, who caught him in his act, did not turn him over for his formal arrest, conviction, and punishment. When he was not stealing, he would eat at restaurants and walk out without paying his bills, or travel in public transport and not buy his tickets. He is now keen to turn a new leaf and wants to encourage society "to start punishing bad guys!" So, he has filed two law suits against himself admitting all his wrong-doings. Will other thieves follow suit?



Laugh till you drop!



Teacher: Why are you late for school, Mini?

Mini: Because of the sign down the road.

Teacher: What sign?

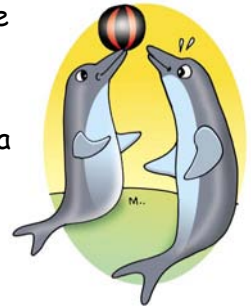
Mini: It says, 'Go Slow - School ahead'.

ଓହୋଓହୋ

First dolphin: My owner is the cleverest man on earth.

Second dolphin: How come?

First dolphin: I've been here a week, and every time I take a leap in the air, he's standing with a bucket of fish.



ଓହୋଓହୋ

Rina: Do you know, I dropped my watch in the river Ganges and it is still running?

Mini: It must be a very expensive watch to be still running.

Rina: Not the watch, it is the river.



ଓହୋଓହୋ



Monu: Why are false teeth like stars?

Sonu: Because they come out at night.

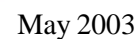


Ram: Why did the burglar take a shower?

Shyam: He wanted to make a clean get away!

Dushtu Dattu





PUZZLE DAZZLE

Meandering course

Rivers are one of our main sources of water. In India, they are worshipped as Goddess and have temples dedicated to them. Given here is a crossword based on the major rivers that flow in our country. Solve them with the help of the clues given.

Across:

- One of the modern Seven Wonders of the World is situated on the banks of this river.
- Throughout its upper course, this river is known as the 'Tsang-Po'.
- Madurai, the temple town, is situated on the banks of this river.
- The second longest river in India, it originates at Triambak.
- One of the five rivers of Punjab.

Down:

- Hirakud, one of the largest dams in the world, is built across this river.
- The Melghat Tiger Reserve is located on the banks of this river.
- This river is considered as the Ganges of the south.
- This river originates at Amarkantak and means 'one who is endowed with bliss'.
- This perennial river is the most sacred one in our country.



PUZZLE DAZZLE

Puneet's problem

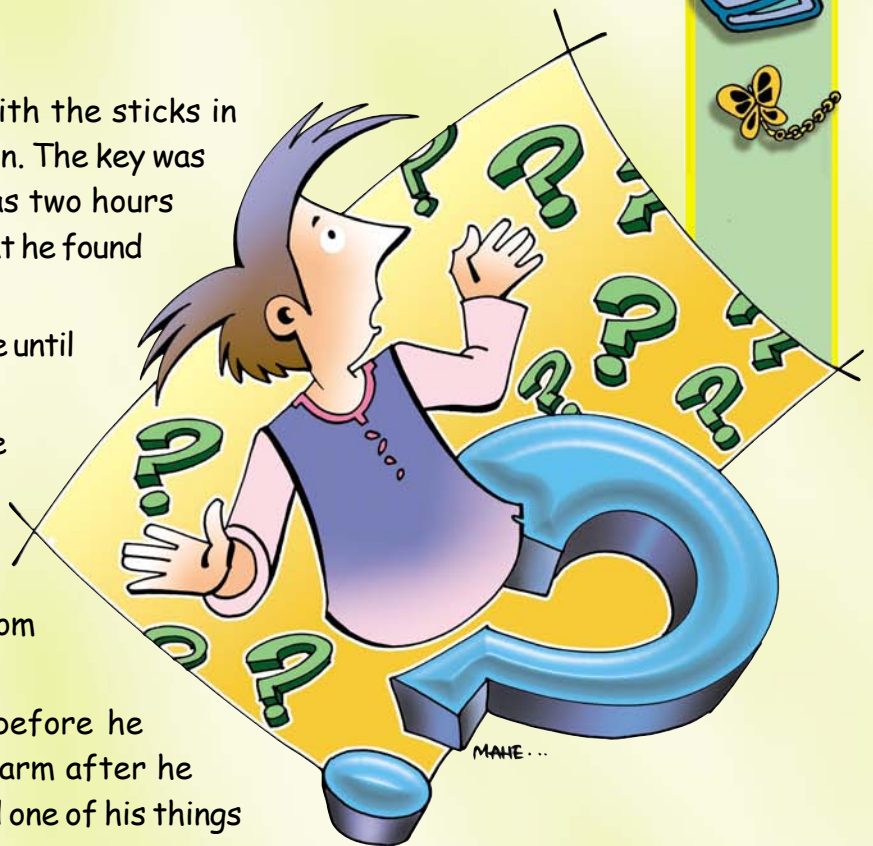
It is summer and Puneet is vacationing at a holiday resort. One day, coming back to his cottage after a long walk, he discovered his place in a mess. Some rodents had been at work. While cleaning up, he also noticed five of his items missing - a gold pen, keys, lucky charm, pen torch, and wallet. After spending many hours cleaning the house, he found these things at various locations and at different times, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Can you find out which item was found where and at what time, with the help of the clues given below?

CLUES:

- Puneet found an object hidden with the sticks in the kitchen sometime before noon. The key was not found in the outhouse. It was two hours after he found his lucky charm that he found the keys.
- Puneet did not search the outhouse until he ate his lunch.
- Neither the pen nor the keys were found under a huge pile of shredded papers. Neither the pen torch nor the wallet was found amidst the stuff torn from his pillow.
- Puneet found his lucky charm before he found his pen, but found the charm after he found his pen torch. Puneet found one of his things under the bed after 11 a.m.
- Puneet did not find his pen torch under the bed, nor did he find it in the outhouse. He took an early lunch to celebrate his finding his pen at 11 a.m.
- Puneet found his wallet one hour before or after he found his keys. The search of the stuff torn from his pillow was later than the search of the shredded papers, but before the search of the kitchen.

(Answers on page 64)

- By Vidhya Raj



ABRACADABRACALOBRADEEBRACALOOMBO

There was a terrible drought in the Dandakaranya forest. The ponds and rivers had all dried up. The animals in the forest had nothing to eat. They went hungry for days together.

Now, there was a magic tree in the forest. The tree is believed to have given fruits to Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita when they stayed in the forest. The animals knew that the magic tree would give them fruits to eat. All they had to do was to stand in front of the tree and call out its name. The problem was, no one in the forest knew its name. Even the oldest among the animals could not remember what the name was.

One evening, the animals who had gone thin because of hunger, gathered round the tree and discussed what was to be done. After a long time, the old lion came forward and said, "My grandfather used to say that only the Mountain Spirit knew the names of trees. Why not we send one of our younger and strong animals to the mountain? Then we shall not die of starvation!"

After much discussion, it was decided that the rabbit, being a swift runner, should undertake the journey to the Mountain Spirit.

Early next morning the rabbit set off for the mountain. Leaving the dry forest behind, he went along the small mountain paths to the peak. There he met the Mountain Spirit. Bowing low he said, "I've come to ask you the name of the magic tree. All my friends are starving. Please tell me what its name is."

"The name is Abracadabracalobradeebracaloombo," said the spirit. "Go back to the forest fast, before you forget it."

"Thank you very much," replied the hare, bowed to the Mountain Spirit, and raced down to the forest. He did not stop to look left or right. He reached the bottom of the mountain and took the path to the forest. He was running fast, eager to reach the tree, where he knew his friends would be waiting anxiously for him.

Crash! He ran straight into an anthill. The anthill fell all over his body. The rabbit managed to recover from the impact and walked slowly towards the tree.

"What's the name? What's the name?" asked the animals eager for action.

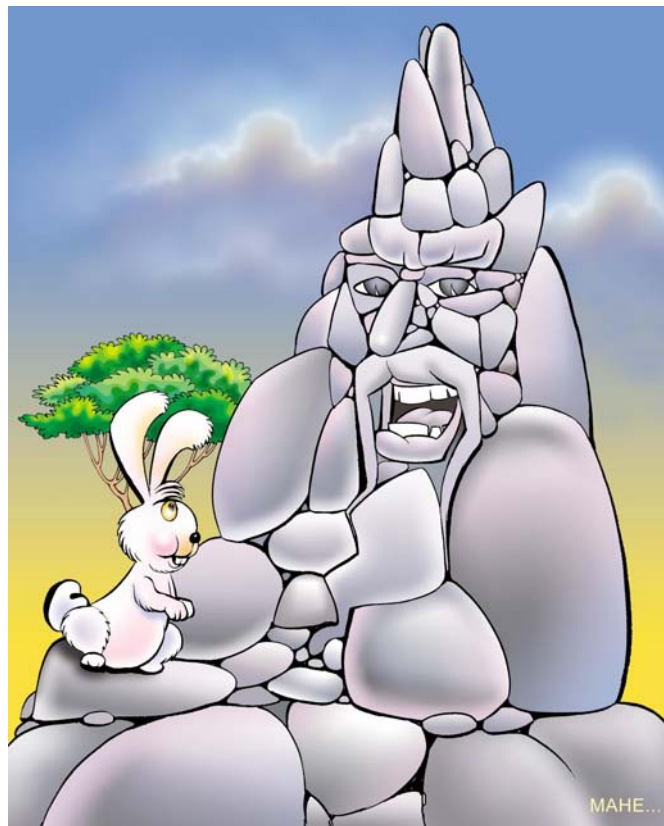
"It is Abraca-abra-dabra.....oh no! I've forgotten!" gasped the poor rabbit.

All the other animals were furious. They pushed the rabbit aside and convened another meeting. This time they chose to send the buffalo to the Mountain Spirit to get the name of the tree.

The buffalo went crashing to the mountain peak and told the Mountain Spirit, "Sir, the rabbit forgot the name of the magic tree. Kindly give me the name so that I can save my friends from starvation."

The Mountain Spirit took pity on the animals. "The name is Abracadabracalobradeebracaloombo. Go fast to your friends before you forget the name."

The buffalo, pleased that he had learnt the name, sprinted back to the forest. As he ran joyfully along the



path that led to the forest, he also crashed against the anthill. He did not notice where he was going or looking ahead. He was just pleased at the thought of getting food after such a long time.

For several moments, the buffalo stood dazed. He did not understand anything. Then he regained his poise and slowly lumbered back to the place where his friends were anxiously waiting for his return.



As soon as they saw him come, the animals rushed towards him. “Name? What’s the magic tree’s name?”

“The name is Abra....abraca...abra...” He stammered and tried hard to remember. But the blow from the anthill had put the word out of his mind.

The animals were all very furious. “If we don’t get to eat anything in a day or two, we’ll all die of starvation. Who can we send now?” said the deer.

It was decided to send lion, the king of the forest. Surely, the king cannot forget the name of the tree, like other animals.

The lion, too, set out very early in the morning and stopped only at the summit of the mountain. There he met the Mountain Spirit. “Both the rabbit and the buffalo have forgotten the name. Kindly tell me the name of the magic tree, so that I could save my subjects from hunger.”

The Mountain Spirit once again agreed to help. “The name of the magic tree is Abracadabracalobradeebra-caloombo. Hurry back to your friends before you forget the name.”

The lion stopped only to thank the Mountain Spirit and raced down the mountain path. As he reached the path that led to the forest, he thought, ‘No other animal could run this swiftly. I shall be back before sunset. All the animals will have food to eat and will praise me.’

Crash! He was keen on watching the sun that he

missed the anthill and bumped into it. He could not recollect the full name of the tree. He stood in front of it and stammered, “Abra...Abra...Abra...” while the other animals jumped and stamped and bellowed at the lion.

All the animals were upset and did not know what to do next. Just then, a small tortoise, which had been standing on the edge of the crowd, came forward and said, “I shall go to the Mountain Spirit. I’ll leave as soon as the sun comes out and will be back with the name of the magic tree.”

The animals, who were all angry, now started laughing. They said, “Do you think you can remember the name, when larger animals have forgotten it?”

“Wait till tomorrow and then see,” was all that the tortoise said. The animals were all very desperate. They were all so hungry and weak that they were willing to send anyone to get the name. They agreed to send the tortoise.

The tortoise set out at the first glimmer of sunrays. He began his climb up the hill slowly. He went on and on, hour after hour. He reached the summit only by noon.

The Mountain Spirit was surprised to find another animal, “Surely, the lion has not forgotten the name?” he asked.

“Yes, the lion, too, has forgotten the name. Kindly let me have it so that my friends can get something to eat,” pleaded the tortoise.

“This is the last time I’m telling the name of the magic tree to you animals. It is Abracadabracalobradeebracaloombo. You better remember this correctly. I’ll not repeat it any more to anyone else,” warned the Mountain Spirit.

“Thank you,” said the tortoise and he began his journey downwards. He passed the mountains slowly repeating the name every now and then. Slowly he reached the plains and the forest. He did not stop anywhere and just went on uttering the name of the tree. When he came to the path that led to the forest, he kept repeating, “Abracadabracalobradeebracaloombo”. He slowly came round the anthill murmuring the name.

It was almost dark by the time he reached the tree. The other animals hardly noticed him. The deer spotted him first. “Come fast and tell us the name of the tree!” he said. All the animals rushed towards him.

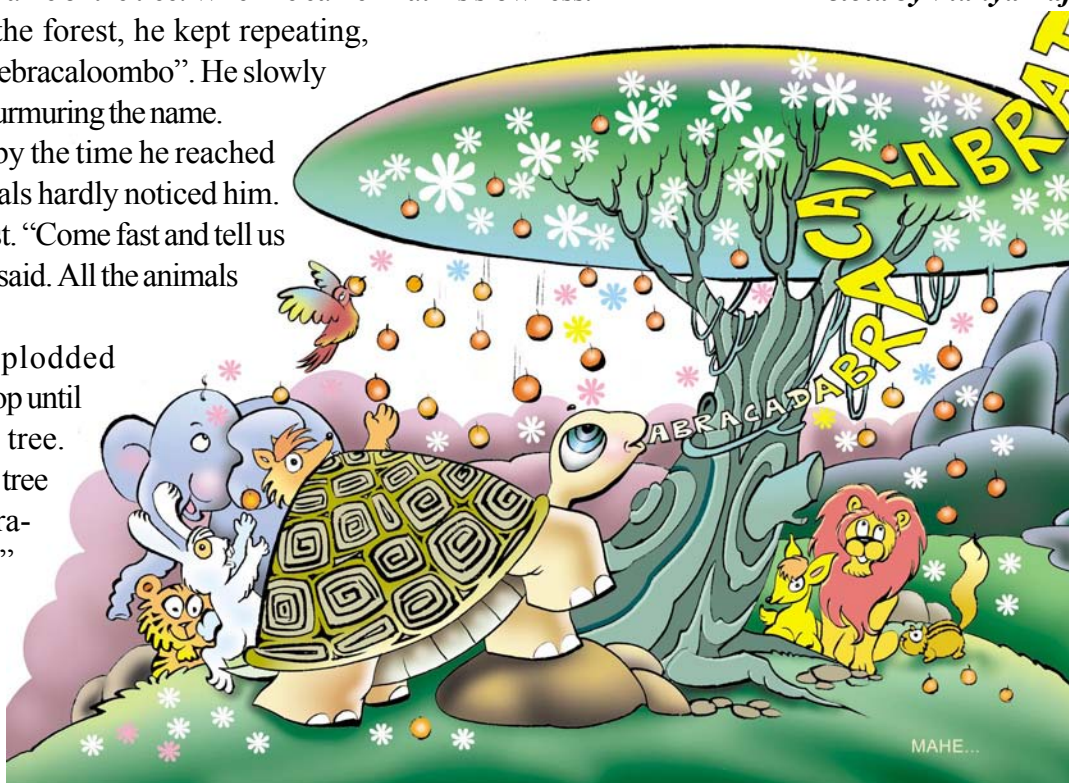
But the tortoise plodded steadily on. He did not stop until he reached the magic tree. There he stood under the tree and said, “Abracadabracalobradeebracaloombo” slowly and distinctly.

Then like rain, delicious juicy fruits dropped from the tree. The hungry animals

rushed and collected the fruits and ate to their heart’s fill. That night was the first in many weeks when the animals slept peacefully with full stomach.

From then on, every day, it was left to the tortoise to stand in front of the tree and utter its name. He alone could remember the name! But all the animals got enough food to eat until the rains came. Fortunately the famine was over soon. The animals were so grateful to the tortoise that they made him their king. Never again did they laugh at his slowness.

- Retold by Vidhya Raj



That's science for you



Which came first: astronomy or mathematics? To look at the skies and know the time of the day requires the use of numbers. To create calendars, one needs to know numbers. So let's say, numbers must have come first.

There's evidence to believe that man knew not only numbers, but about angles and how to measure them as far back as 2000 B.C., when Stonehenge was built in England. Wonder how the first angles were discovered and described?

CHANDAMAMA
PRESENTS

ARYA

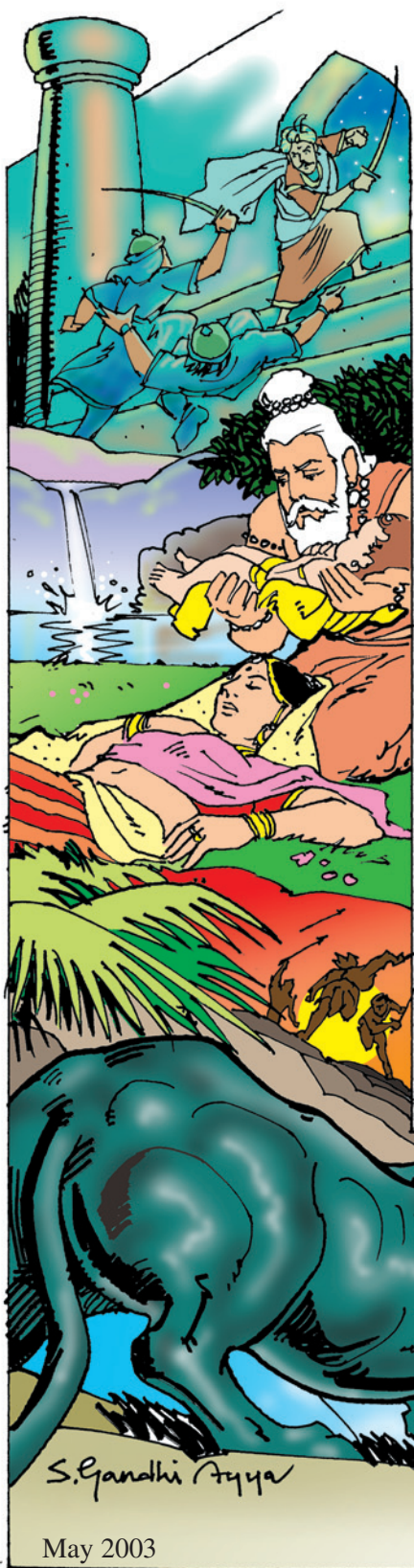
The Mystery of the Unknown Prince



Arya is living in the forest amongst animals. He is nurtured by a bear. His playmates are the monkey, tiger cubs, and the elephant. The hermit, who brought him up, has passed on to him the special gift of conversing with animals.

Read the new comics in Chandamama from the June 2003 issue to find out more about a bandit prince and his exploits.

**Book your copy today
with your nearest news
agent!**



On the peak, 50 years ago

It was one of man's conquests - the conquest of Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world. Fifty years ago, on May 29, 1953, two men for the first ever time climbed the 8,850 metres (29,028 ft) high peak. They were **Tenzing Norgay**, a sherpa from India, and **Edmund Hillary**, from New Zealand. It was a moment of glory, to be etched in the annals of history in golden letters.



Days later, a question was asked. After all, the peak has space for only one person to stand. If so, who climbed first? Tenzing would initially shy away from a direct answer. He would only say, "We climbed as a team." However, in his autobiography, *Tiger of the Snows*, he describes the final moments thus: "A little below the summit, Hillary and I stopped. We looked up. Then we went on. The rope that joined us was 30 ft long, and I held most of it in loops in my hand, so there was only about six feet between us. I was *not* thinking of 'first' or 'second'... we went on slowly, steadily. And then *we* were there! Hillary stepped on top first; and I stepped *after* him." This is how Tenzing felt when he actually stood on the peak: "I loved Everest too well. At that great moment, for which I had waited all my life, my mountain did not seem to me a lifeless thing of rock and ice, but warm and friendly and living."

Tenzing 'wrote' several books; in fact, they were physically written by someone else while he dictated the words and sentences, for, he had never learnt to write! At the same time, he could speak seven languages. In all that he wrote, he did not omit to describe the long road he traversed starting as a "mountain coolie" and ending up with "wearing a coat emblazoned with rows

and rows of medals".

The Everest can be approached from four sides; the climb from Tibet is considered the most hazardous. Most climbers prefer to start from the Nepal side. In the last 50 years, more than 660 mountaineers from 63 countries have successfully scaled the Everest. The Nepal Government, which is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the day man stood on the peak, has invited all living summiteers to assemble at Kathmandu.

It was the British Surveyor-General of India, Sir George Everest who, while mapping the Himalaya mountain ranges in 1852, came upon the peak. There is an interesting story how he fixed its height. The original measurement he made was 29,000 ft. He doubted whether people would accept a round figure! So, he added two feet, so that people would take it as near accurate! It was during subsequent surveys that the height was finally fixed at 29,028 ft which Hillary and Tenzing sought to climb.

Very recently, China had made a claim that the Everest had been mapped as early as 1717 and, therefore, its name should not be Everest, but Qomolangma. The peak is called Sagarmatha (goddess of the sky) in Nepal; the Tibetans call it



Chomolungma (mother goddess of the universe); the Kashmiris call it Kaytu, which must have originated from K2, the way mountaineers identify the peak. Incidentally, the mount is believed to be rising each year by a few millimetres because of geological forces. Four years ago, the height of Everest was given out as 29,035 ft.

It had taken nearly 50 days for Hillary and Tenzing to reach the peak from the base camp, but only three days to come down. During those

days, they had only each other for company! The fastest ascent was made by an Italian called Hans Kammerlander who, on May 24, 1996, took only 16 hours 45 minutes to reach the top from the base camp. And the record for the fastest descent is in the name of Jean-Marc Boivin of

France who made it in just 11 minutes; he did that by paragliding from the top.

Climbing the Everest is mostly attempted by teams. The first solo ascent was made by Reinhold Messner of Italy in August 20, 1980.

For some climbers, the Everest is a perennial challenge. For instance, Appa Sherpa trekked to the peak for the eleventh time on May 24, 2000. Kushang Sherpa, an instructor with the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, is the only climber who went up to the top from all four sides.

Babu Chiri Sherpa, who made an ascent in 16 hours 56 minutes on May 21, 2000, stayed at the summit for more than 21 hours, that too without oxygen.

The youngest person to climb the Everest is Temba Tshiri of Nepal. He was only 15 years when he reached the peak on May 22, 2001. And the oldest male climber was Sherman Bull (64 years), who went up to the peak on May 25, 2001. His son, Brad Bull, who was with



him, also climbed the peak. The oldest woman was 50-year-old Anna Czerwinoka of Poland, who climbed the peak on May 22, 2000. Erik Weißenmeyer was the first visually handicapped person to reach the top; he made it on May 25, 2001.

The largest number of climbers who made it to the top on a single day was 40. This happened on May 10, 1993. In 1975, China sent the largest team - 410 climbers - to the Everest in 1975. It is estimated that some 4,000 climbers had gone on the Everest adventure in the past 50 years.

India had to wait for 31 years, after the Hillary-Tenzing conquest, to put an Indian woman on the Everest. That was Bachendri Pal, who climbed the peak on May 24, 1984. And this happened nine years after a Japanese woman, Junko Tabei, stood on the peak on May 16, 1975.



Another Indian woman, Santosh Yadav, holds a world record. She is the first woman who climbed the Everest twice—on May 12, 1992 and May 10, 1993.

Phu Dorjee is the first Indian to reach the peak without oxygen. He was a member of the May 1984 India Everest Expedition.



Birthday bash

Peter Hillary (extreme right) and Tenzing Tashi Norgay (extreme left), both of whom have already gone up the peak earlier hope to celebrate, not their birthday, but the 50th “birthday” of the first ever Everest climb by their father and grandfather respectively. The two are on their way to the peak by different routes and hope to “meet” at the world’s highest peak pluckily on May 29 for what has been described as a ‘big birthday bash’. That would then be a fitting tribute to the spirit of the two great men of 1953, marking the triumph of human spirit.



Heard of bachelor girls?

★ *Reader Ibrahim Ghouse of Vijayawada asks: I have understood the word ‘bachelor’ to mean ‘unmarried male’. The expansion of the degree B.A. is Bachelor of Arts. Could you explain?*

The word has originated from the French *bachelor*, meaning a young man who is an aspirant of the position of knight, as he is considered not old enough to march under his own banner.

A Bachelor of Arts is one holding the lowest degree in a University, and is not yet an M.A. or Master of Arts. Bachelor of Arts, of course, was applicable to women, too. In course of time, the word bachelor acquired the meaning of young unmarried man. In the 16th century, *bachelor* was also used to denote a young unmarried woman. Three centuries later, this meaning was given up.

However, ‘bachelor girl’ is an expression in use today - to mean a girl not married. The word ‘spinster’ also means an unmarried woman, but it is generally used to refer to old women who have remained unmarried.

★ *I am often confused with the abbreviations i.e. and e.g. What do they mean? asks Pushpa Mathen of Chenganoor, Kerala.*

The abbreviation i.e. comes from the Latin *id est*, which means “that is to say”. If someone tells you: “I shall meet you next Saturday, that is to say, fifteenth”, you will easily understand without looking into the calendar.

When the same is written down “I shall meet you next Saturday, i.e. 15th” you will not ‘read’ it aloud as i.e., but ‘that is to say’ if you have a listener. The abbreviation e.g. comes from the Latin phrase *exempli gratia*, meaning ‘for example’ or ‘for instance’. Take this sentence: *The people of Kerala celebrate some unique festivals, e.g. Vishu.*

When the sentence is read aloud, the abbreviation is read in its expanded version. When it is written, instead of ‘for example’, only the abbreviation is used. The two abbreviations are always written in small letters and should be preceded by a comma.

★ *Who is a latchkey child? asks reader Jyotiranjana Biswal of Durgapur.*

A latchkey child or children are very much a modern phenomenon. Where both father and mother go for work and are not expected to return home early, their school-going child, who has been given a spare key, opens the door and enters an empty house and probably fends for himself till his or her parents come back. He has to help himself to food prepared in the morning and kept on the dining table and after eating, think of spending his time awake or asleep to await his parents’ company.

This has nowadays become a common happening, especially in cities and towns where homes do not generally have grandparents and/or aunts-uncles waiting for the child/children come.

PRABHUDAS AND GOD

Guru Ramdas had many disciples in his ashram. Prabhudas was one of them. He fluently quoted from the scriptures and was never tired of talking to and advising anyone who was willing to listen.

“It’s a pleasure to have such a student,” commented the sages who visited the ashram. But the guru himself was hardly enthusiastic about Prabhudas. He only smiled, whenever others spoke in praise of the disciple.

Once the guru had to send a message to the king. He asked his students, “Who amongst you is willing to visit the court?”

All but Prabhudas said, “Whoever you choose, sir!”

Prabhudas alone said, “I shall be happy to go, master!”

Guru Ramdas was quiet for some time. But after an hour Prabhudas approached him and asked humbly, “When do I start?”

The guru thought for a moment and said, “I’ve no doubt you’ve learnt all that I’ve taught you, but I’m not sure if you can make the right use of them!”

“I can, master. You may test me if you so wish,” said Prabhudas enthusiastically.

“Very well. Here’s my letter to the king. Take it carefully and come back with his reply soon,” said the guru, handing over a sheaf of palm leaves to Prabhudas.

Soon Prabhudas set out. On the way, he recollected a number of lessons he had learnt. One that came to his mind readily was his guru’s advice to look upon every being, human or animal as a manifestation of God.

‘The road I’m walking, the breeze,

these trees, are all manifestations of God. I’ve realised what my guru had taught. That too, very quickly!’ thought Prabhudas.

Suddenly, he heard some noise. He saw a mad elephant rushing towards him. ‘Everything is God. I’m God, so is this elephant. God cannot harm God,’ argued Prabhudas within himself and continued to walk.

The elephant was closing in. “Get away, young man, get away!” shouted the mahout while trying to control the animal.

‘Here’s an opportunity to put the guru’s teaching into practice. I’m God, the elephant, too, is God. There’s no sense in God fearing God!’ thought Prabhudas and continued on the road.

“Get off the road, you fool!” shouted the mahout. But Prabhudas refused to move. Before anyone could come to his rescue, the elephant caught him in its trunk and hurled him away.

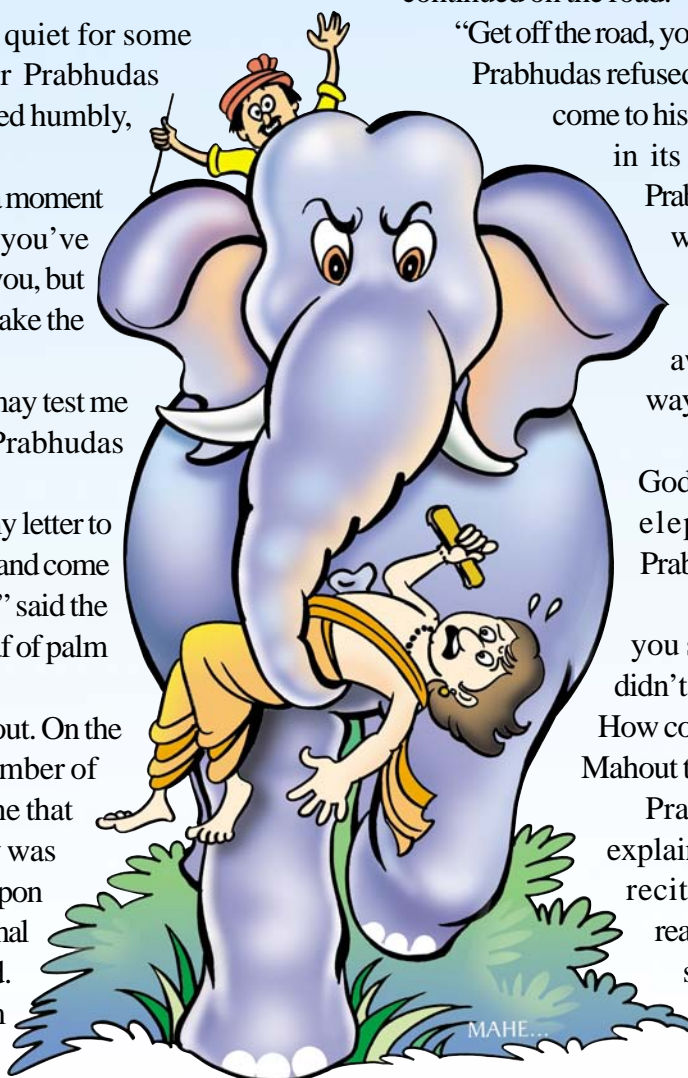
Prabhudas fell down unconscious. He was taken to the ashram. He regained his sense soon.

“Why didn’t you move away from the mad elephant’s way?” asked Guru Ramdas.

“Master, I thought Prabhudas the God would not be treated badly by elephant the God,” replied Prabhudas, naively.

The guru smiled and asked, “If you saw God in the elephant, why didn’t you see the God in the mahout? How could Prabhudas the God disobey Mahout the God?”

Prabhudas fell silent. The guru explained, “It’s easy to remember or recite a theory. It’s difficult to realise it. You forgot your common sense. If you hadn’t done so, you would have listened to the mahout.”



Story of Ganesa

17. Agasthya and the boy sculptor

Sage Agasthya, stung by his wife Lopamudra's complaint that he had not provided her with clothes and ornaments befitting a princess, had come out of his hermitage in search of enough wealth to fulfil her desires.

During his wanderings, he came upon a piece of rock on which, he thought, he saw an image of Vighneswara. Pleased with his prayers, the Lord appeared before him. The sage now very much wanted to have the rock carved into a statue of Vighneswara.

In the forest dwelled two rakshasas, Vatapi and Ilval, who indulged in magic to rob the wayfarers of the money and other wealth they carried with them. They accosted Agasthya and began playing tricks on him. The sage, however, guessed who they were and thwarted their attempts. Soon, the rakshasas were taking to their heels to save themselves from shame.

Agasthya then found their hide-out and came upon the wealth they had collected from innocent people. He called everybody from the neighbourhood and distributed a portion of the wealth to them. With the remaining money, gold coins and ornaments, and precious stones, Agasthya thought of raising a whole city which would give shelter to many people, who would then lead a peaceful life.

Soon, a city rose around the rock on which the sage had seen the image of Vighneswara. It was named after Vatapi. The sage had codes of conduct and administration inscribed in every nook and corner of the city. The people conducted their own affairs in a very democratic way. Ultimately, Vatapinagari became an ideal city.

Agasthya now turned his attention to carving a statue

of Vighneswara. He found that his wife Lopamudra was a good artist. She inspected the rock and drew a picture of the Lord which could be the model for the statue. However, Agasthya could not find a competent sculptor to carve the image. The sage spent days looking at the picture and at the rock.

Some sculptors, on seeing the rock, commented that it was no ordinary rock, and it had some particles of diamond, which gave a peculiar sheen to the rock. They said, only the devas or yakshas would be able to sculpt and that, too, with special chisels which had some divine quality.

Agasthya now meditated on Lord Vighneswara. He sat before the rock and made an earnest plea: "O Lord! My desire to have your image carved out of this rock has remained unfulfilled. O Vighneswara! It's your responsibility to see that my desire gets materialised."

As there was no immediate response to his prayers, Agasthya continued to sit in front of the rock without getting up for a drop of drink or a morsel of food.

One day, he woke up from his reverie on hearing someone address him: "O sage! What is that you chant in front of this huge stone?"

Agasthya saw a young boy standing before him. He was somewhat fat and had a paunch. He was holding in his hand something shining. It could be a knife or a chisel. "I've come here in search of work," the boy added.

"Are you a sculptor?" queried Agasthya. "I've been very eager to have a statue carved out of this huge stone in front of us - a statue of Lord Vighneswara. Here, look



at this picture." The sage then unscrolled the picture of the Lord made by Lopamudra. "But tell me, who are you? What do you do for a living?"

"Oh! I wish to eat to my heart's content, and for that I go about sculpting figures," replied the young boy with a smile. "I'm called a boy-sculptor."

Agasthya took a good look at the boy and said, "But this stone is too huge for a little boy like you. How can I ask you to do the job for me?"

The boy now began to laugh. "Look at this chisel. I can do wonders with it," responded the boy and showed the implement in his hand. It was glistening like a diamond. He then hurled the chisel against the huge stone. The chisel hit it with a thunderous noise, and where the chisel hit, the stone had broken into pieces.

"This stone has an unusual quality. As the chiselling goes on, it will illumine with a powerful glow which will blind anybody near it. So, O sage, I would advise you to go home and be rest assured that the statue would be ready by tomorrow morning."

Agasthya was also feeling tired and so he decided to go back to his hermitage. As he was about to leave, he handed the picture in his hand to the young sculptor, who said, "I've already seen it, there's no need for me to take another look at it."

Agasthya went back, taking with him whatever items he was left with after distributing the wealth recovered from the hide-out of the two giants. On seeing them in her husband's hands, Lopamudra felt ashamed and apologised to the sage. "When I'm wedded to a hermit, I must also decide to lead the life of a hermit's wife. I should not have desired for riches and luxury. Please forgive me."

Agasthya told her about the young sculptor and said, "He has promised to carve out the figure of Vighneswara just as you have drawn His image."

"And you say, the statue would be ready by tomorrow morning?" Lopamudra said unbelievably. The sage lay down, but no sleep would come to him. He tossed this way and that for a long time, and then got up and went to where the young sculptor was at work. He could not believe his eyes. It was not one pair of hands that was at work, but several pairs and they all were holding glistening chisels. Agasthya fell down unconscious.

When he woke up, he saw the boy-sculptor standing near him, smiling. It was already dawn. "You may go and ask whoever had drawn the picture to come here and see whether the statue looks like the image that has been drawn."

"I told you it was drawn by my wife," said the sage. "There! She's coming to meet us. Let's listen to what she says."



Lopamudra was wonderstruck at what she saw. Whoever was the sculptor, had captured all the details she had drawn in her picture of Lord Vighneswara. She stood silently in front of the statue for sometime forgetting herself.

Agasthya turned to the young boy and said, "Pray, what kind of remuneration can I offer you for the job you have done?"

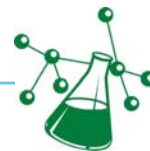
The boy-sculptor did not reply him directly but looked at Lopamudra. "Mother, just give me one of the laddus you have brought."

Lopamudra placed the tray she was carrying at the feet of the young boy and prostrated in front of him. "O Lord Vighneswara! Please accept our humble offering and bless us!"

The sage, too, prostrated in front of the young boy. "O! Remover of Obstacles! I had always taken pride in my yogic powers. Yet, I was unable to recognise You when You appeared to me yesterday. Please forgive me."

Vighneswara blessed Agasthya and Lopamudra and then disappeared. The sage and his wife began to sing in praise of Vatapi Ganapati.

(To continue)



Jellyfish

The jellyfish is not really a fish. They are related to corals and sea anemones. The body of the jellyfish is composed of 95 per cent water, and is totally transparent. This helps them remain unseen in the oceans. They are extremely fragile beings. They have no head, brain, heart, eyes, ears or bones. They do have a mouth to eat food. The net of tentacles hanging from their bell-shaped body is lined with poisonous stinging cells. Tiny harpoons in these stinging cells inject venom into the victims and paralyse them.

The jellyfish relies on smell and light perception to steer clear of danger and to hunt for food. They have an amazing sense of balance and are helped by special sacs on the bell rim to alert them.

The jellyfish is one of the oldest surviving creatures in the world. They have been around for over 600 million years. The jellyfish can be found in all the oceans of the world. Some even live in freshwater lakes.

There are more than 200 different species of jellyfish! Australia's box jelly is the most dangerous of all. Its toxin is more potent than cobra venom and can kill a person in a few minutes. The bells of some jellyfish measure up to 2.4 m in diameter, and the tentacles can be as much as 60 m long.

Jet stream

Jet streams are winds blowing over the earth. They are rivers of fast - flowing air at high altitudes. They travel at a speed of 370 km per hour. Jet streams are 161 to 644 km wide and 914 to 2,134 m thick. They generally flow at a height of 10,700 m above the ground. It generally flows west to east, due to the rotation of the earth.

Jet streams are formed in the upper atmosphere because of the temperature difference found there. The abrupt change in temperature between the cold polar air and the warm tropical air causes a large difference in pressure. This forces the air to move. Jet streams are at their fastest in winter. This is because there is a greater difference in temperature.

Jet streams were first discovered during World War II. Pilots found that it took them more time to travel to the USA from the UK than the other way round. They realised it was these high winds that slowed them. These winds were then named jet streams.





Jupiter



Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system. It has sixteen known moons. Jupiter looks very bright like a star. But it is a planet; it does not reflect any light. What we see is sunlight reflected on it.

The diameter of Jupiter is eleven times that of earth. Scientists say that the mass of Jupiter is equal to two-thirds of the total mass of all other objects in the solar system. If you ever think of filling the giant ball of Jupiter with beads the size of the earth, you would need as many as 318 beads!

Scientists surmise that Jupiter has a rocky core, like that of the earth. But the bulk of Jupiter is composed of lighter substances, mostly gases like hydrogen, helium, methane, ammonia, and water. The gravitational force of Jupiter is $2\frac{1}{2}$ times stronger than that of our planet, the earth. This makes walking on Jupiter nearly impossible.

But what's most fascinating is that, in spite of its size and bulk, Jupiter moves fast. It rotates on its axis once in only 9 hours 55 minutes (as compared to the 24 hours the earth takes to rotate).

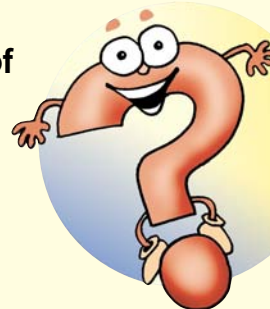
Believe it or not, Jupiter rotates faster than any other planet in the solar system!

Jupiter can easily be seen in the night sky, without a telescope. If seen with a small telescope, the four larger moons of Jupiter can also be seen.

Activity

Given below are a few sentences.
Fill in the blanks with the help of
the clues given.

1. I am a precious stone as well as a plant: J ____.
2. I belong to the cat family: J ____.
3. I am known as a jumping rodent: J ____.
4. I am a shrub belonging to the olive family. My flowers are known for their fragrance: J ____.
5. I am a wild member of the dog family: J ____.



1. Jade, 2. Jaguar, 3. Jerboa
4. Jasmine, 5. Jackal

Answers:

- Compiled by Vidhya Raj

THE GODDESS WHO RAN AWAY

Many ancient temples have fascinating legends behind their origin. One such legend – a highly interesting one – relates to a little - known temple of Kumaranalloor, a village in southern Kerala, linking it with the famous Meenakshi temple of Madurai.

This story goes back to a time when the Pandya kings were ruling southern Tamil Nadu with Madurai as their capital. They worshipped Goddess Meenakshi as their patron deity.

One day, the priceless gem-studded nose-ring that adorned the idol went missing. No one knew where it had vanished. The entire temple was thoroughly searched, but in vain. Finally, the king concluded that as the priest was the only one allowed to enter the *sanctum sanctorum*, he must have been the thief.

He sent for the priest and questioned him. Now, the priest was a very honest man. As he was genuinely devoted to the goddess, he was grief-stricken about the loss of the nose-ring. But all his protestations of innocence failed to move the king, who sternly decreed that he had to produce the ornament within 40 days or lose his head.

What could the priest do? He was helpless. The days flew past and all too soon, the penultimate day had also drawn to a close.

That night, the priest lay sadly in bed, thinking about his execution that might take place the next morning. Finally he fell into an uneasy slumber.

Suddenly, a voice spoke in his ears, “Now is your chance to escape – the guards are all asleep. Arise and flee!” He opened his eyes to find no one there. Dismissing it as a dream, he shut his eyes again – only to

hear the same voice again. Finally, when it happened for the third time, he said to himself, ‘Surely it is the goddess Herself who has come to my aid. I must obey Her.’ He crept out of his house and began to run.

Suddenly a luminous, beautiful woman appeared before him saying, “All these years you have served me devotedly. Now, if you are leaving, I too am going with you.” The two of them went on running and soon the woman overtook him. Because of the brightness she emitted, the priest had no difficulty in seeing the path ahead even though it was a dark, moonless night. They

had run some distance when, all of a sudden, the woman vanished abruptly, leaving the entire place in pitch darkness.

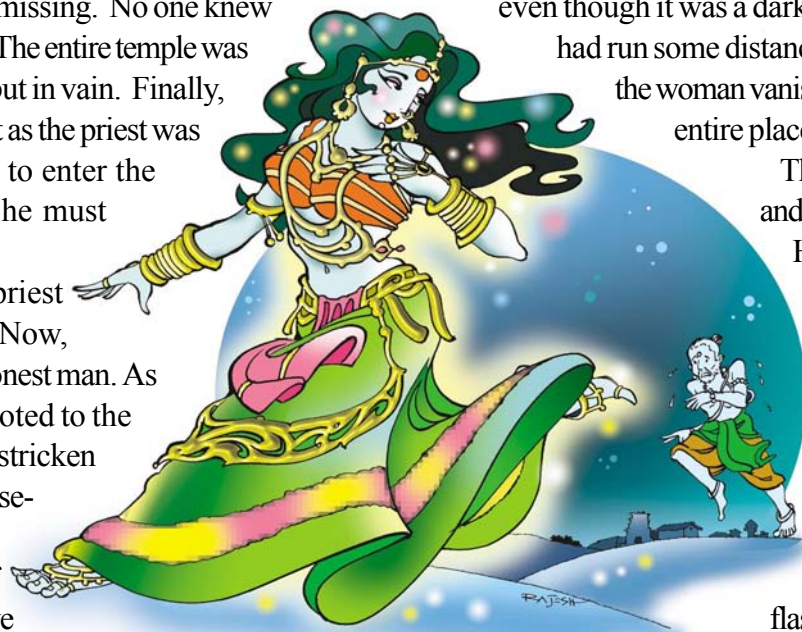
The priest was bewildered and did not know what to do.

He could not find his way in the dark; moreover, he was totally exhausted. However, fear of the king’s guards kept him going and he groped his way ahead for a while. A bolt of lightning flashed, revealing a wayside temple. He stumbled into it,

spread his upper cloth on the floor and fell into a fatigued sleep.

The ruler of the Chera kingdom had commissioned two temples – one, intended for a goddess, at Udayanapuram and the other, meant for Lord Subrahmanya, at Kumaranalloor. Both temples had just been completed and were awaiting the auspicious day for consecrating the idol. The latter temple was the one where the priest had taken shelter.

The next morning, the priest woke up to a wondrous spectacle. Looking into the *sanctum sanctorum*, he perceived a magnificent goddess – the same woman who



had run alongside the previous night – sitting inside.

Very excited, he ran around telling everyone that Goddess Meenakshi of Madurai had entered the temple. Soon the news reached the king and he came there to verify the miracle. The priest told him the whole story.

No doubt the king, as a believer, marvelled at the tale, but he was also somewhat peeved that the goddess had, by her uninvited entry, frustrated his grand plans for the Subrahmanya temple. In a fit of pique he declared, “I am not going to accord any honours for this brash gate-crasher. If she is that smart, let her earn them for herself! Anyway as she is already in, she may stay. I shall duly install Lord Subrahmanya at the predetermined *muhurtham*, in the other temple.” So saying, he left for Udayanapuram with his retinue.

The royal party had gone only a few miles when suddenly a thick mist fell all over the place, totally obscuring their vision. Their journey ended abruptly.

The courtiers now opined that this was a miracle wrought by the goddess. The king declared, “If this is indeed the work of the goddess, then may the mist get lifted. If it does, I promise that I shall hand over all the lands visible from this point to Her, and conduct the consecration ritual with all due ceremony.” Instantly the fog lifted, and they could see again. The king was convinced now. Abandoning his journey, he returned to Kumaranalloor with his entourage and gave orders for

the consecration to go ahead.

The idol of Subrahmanya was sent to the Udayanapuram temple, and the king ordered for the idol of the goddess to be brought to Kumaranalloor for consecration.

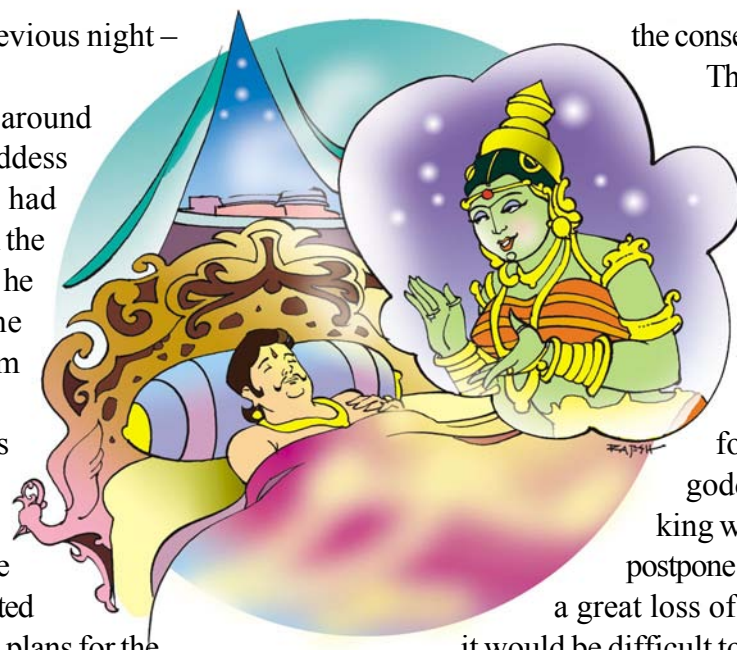
However, at the appointed hour, it was found that the idol of the goddess was not ready. The king was greatly distressed. To postpone the ceremony would mean a great loss of face for him; moreover, it would be difficult to find another auspicious

day again.

That night, as the king fell into a disturbed sleep, the goddess appeared before him in a dream and said, “Do not worry. An idol of mine is lying in a well two miles northeast from here. Take it and carry out the rituals.” Early next morning, the king himself set out with a big party to follow the goddess’s instructions. Going in the specified direction, they reached a dense forest. Deep inside was a well in disuse. When they searched, they found a beautiful idol in excellent condition.

The consecration ceremony went as per schedule. The king kept his word and gifted all the lands surrounding the temple to the goddess, and these became the temple’s property.

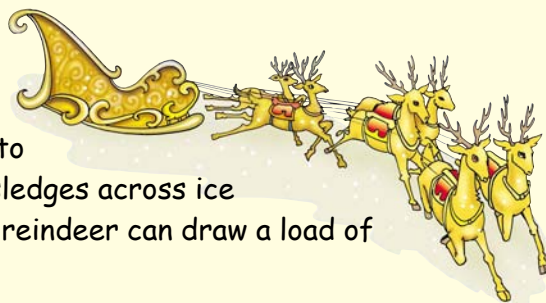
It is believed that the goddess still reigns at Kumaranalloor in all her glory. The descendants of the priest, who came with her from Madurai, served at the Kumaranalloor temple for a long time. They are known as the Madurai Brahmins. **- By Rajee Raman**



A long haul on ice and snow

Can you guess which species of deer can pull vehicles?

The reindeer, of course. They are the only kinds of deer to be used regularly as draught animals. The reindeer pull sledges across ice and snow in many regions close to the Arctic Circle. One reindeer can draw a load of 200kg over snow and cover a distance of 40km in a day.



Vasudha

Dear eco friends,

The summer holidays are here, at long last! Why don't you spend this summer in an eco-friendly way? Wear only cotton dresses. Cotton is a good absorber of sweat and circulates the air. And it keeps you **COOL**!

Love

KOPRA KUTTY



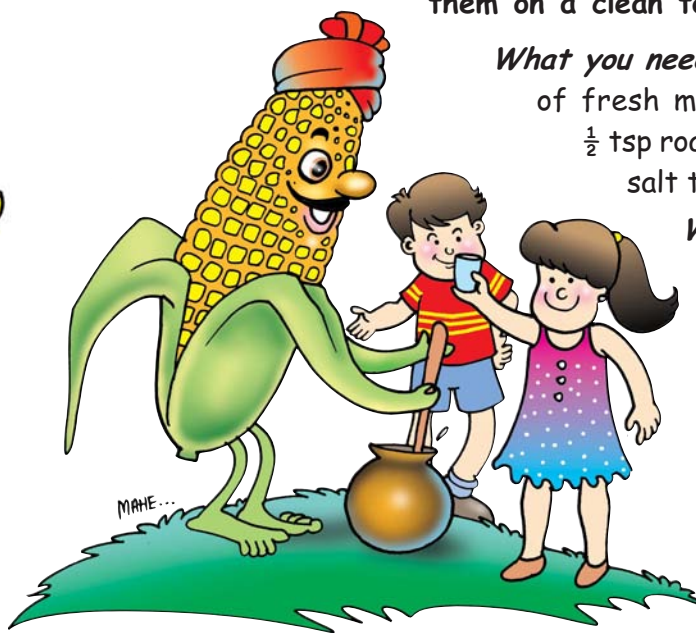
Thirst quenchers - Minty cool sip

Don't go in for those artificial drinks to quench your thirst. Here's a cool frothy way to beat the heat - and a wonderful drink to serve your guests anytime on a simmering day. Try it once, and you'll probably want to gulp down glassesful every day. Before starting on any recipe, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and wipe them on a clean towel.

What you need: $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of curd or yoghurt; 12 leaves of fresh mint, washed well; 1 cup of cold water; $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp roasted and ground jeera; 8 or 9 ice cubes; salt to taste.

What you do: Finely chop eight of the mint leaves. Pour the curd, water and the mint leaves in a vessel. Churn them with a traditional hand blender (matthu), until they are mixed thoroughly. Add the jeera powder, salt and crushed ice cubes and continue blending for another half a minute or until the drink is frothy. (The ice cubes should not disintegrate fully.) Pour the drink, with the ice cubes, into four tall glasses. Squeeze the four

remaining mint leaves lightly between your fingertips to release their fragrance. Place them atop the frothy drink in the glasses. Serve at once.





Doc at your doorstep

What do you use for bathing? A scented soap promoted by your favourite movie star? Do you know soaps can dry your skin? They rob the vital moisture in your skin. If you have any doubt, check for yourself.

Pinch your skin - if it leaves a white mark, there is not enough moisture in your skin. What should you do to avoid this? Don't use soap. Scrub and clean yourself the traditional way.

Take some bengal gram or whole green gram and dry it in the sun. Add some rose petals and dried lemon rinds to it. Powder it and store in an airtight container.

Take a spoonful of the powder, and make a paste of it with a little rosewater. Use it instead of soap. As you step out of your bath, you will be enveloped in a gentle fragrance. Also your skin won't dry or peel off anymore.

Think Link

Do you want to know what biodiversity is all about? A small exercise can demonstrate it for you. This can be undertaken even by a small group. How many varieties of vegetables and fruit do you eat regularly? Watch your eating habits for a week and keep a record of the varieties of vegetables and fruits you eat. At the end of the week, go to the nearest market and make a note of the vegetables you see there. Have you tasted them all? Wouldn't you like to include more of them in your diet?

Why do you think farmers grow so many varieties of oranges and grapes and eggplants and bananas and onions? Search for answers to these questions. Also see how many more native vegetables and fruits you can include in your diet. And start including them. They're good for your health, and good for the farmers too!



The voice from the roof

Somnath was a very greedy person. A rich farmer, he owned a lot of landed property. And yet he never got tired of cheating people to acquire more and more land. One day, as he was returning to the village after attending to some work in the town, his eyes fell on the big old temple in the outskirts. It was in a dilapidated condition. The roof was leaking and there were cracks on the wall. Greedy as he was, Somnath got an idea. ‘Nobody comes to this temple any longer. Let me take it over and call it *my* property!’

So he built a small house in front of the temple and declared that he would let it out on rent. The entire village knew that he had actually taken over the temple property. But he was influential and the villagers could do nothing about it.

One day, a poor man called Deva arrived in the village with his family. He did not have a place to live in. So he went to Somnath for help. “Will you please let out the house to me?”

“Ah! It’s a holy place, protected by the god!” said Somnath. “You’ve to pay a rent of 250 coins per month.”

Deva knew he could not afford such a big rent till he

found a good job for himself. At the same time, his family had to be sheltered somewhere, so he agreed with great reluctance.

Deva and his family went to the temple complex. They first went to the temple and worshipped the deity. They swept and cleaned the temple, put garlands of flowers on the idol and made offerings of wild fruits.

Then they stepped into the house. As there was nothing in the house that they could cook with and eat, their two children went to sleep, crying of hunger. Deva and his wife sat, praying for help.

In the dead of night came a shrill voice. “Shall I fall down?”

“Ghosts!” cried Deva’s wife.

“Oh no!” said Deva. “It sounds like some poor, miserable creature huddling on the roof. There’s enough place here for one more being.” He called out to the voice, “Please do come down. You’re welcome to our house!”

Immediately there was a jingling sound and Deva and his wife were amazed to see a shower of gold coins falling into the room from the roof.

Then the voice said, “You’re pious and kind. I protect and help those who worship me. If you continue to be good, I shall shower on you a thousand gold coins every day. I am the god of this temple.” The happy couple thanked him and offered prayers.

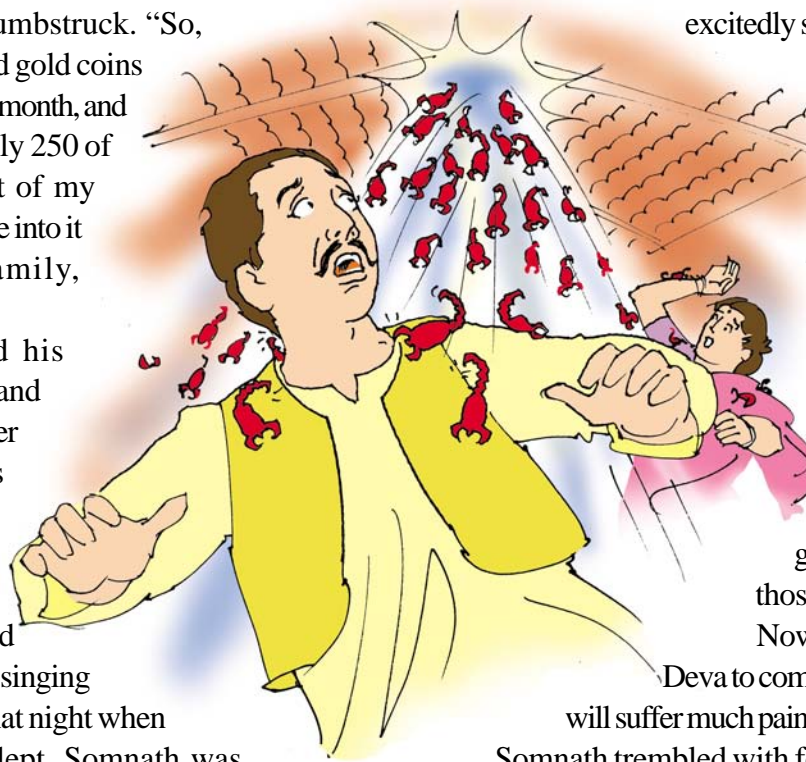
The next day, Deva went to pay Somnath his first rent and to buy good food for his family. When Somnath saw the gleaming gold coins in his hand, he wanted to know where Deva had got them from. Deva told him the whole story.



Somnath was dumbstruck. “So, you’ll get a thousand gold coins from my house every month, and you will give me only 250 of them! Now get out of my house. I want to move into it with my family, immediately.”

Poor Deva and his family had to leave and go in search of another house. Somnath’s family moved into the house and celebrated their good luck with a grand feast; there was loud singing and dancing, too. That night when the entire family slept, Somnath was woken up by a loud voice that came from his roof. It said, “Shall I fall down?”

Somnath remembered Deva’s experience, and



excitedly said, “Yes yes, please fall!”

Immediately, there was a loud rustling noise, followed by a shower of scorpions from the roof. They scuttled here and there, biting everybody. Everyone screamed in terror and pain. Then the strange voice in the roof said, “You are greedy and impious. I am the god of this temple. I punish those who do wrong.

Now leave this house and ask Deva to come back here, or your family will suffer much pain.”

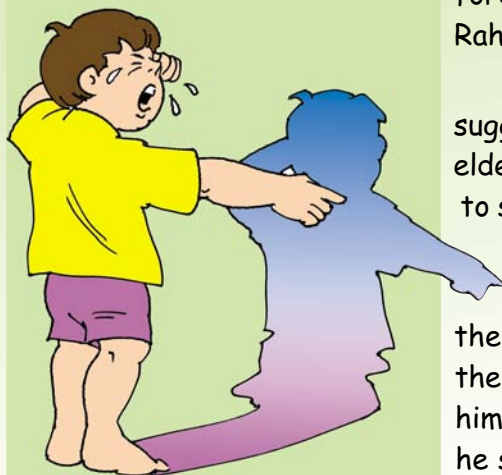
Somnath trembled with fear and promised to do as he had been told.

Very soon, Deva and his family were back at the temple house. And the gold coins continued to roll!

Catch yourself

Little Rahul was crying non-stop one evening. His parents were worried. They were not able to stop his cries. They tried all sorts of methods to distract him. Rahul’s father gave him a bar of chocolate and tried to divert his attention. Rahul ate the chocolate and started crying again.

Rahul’s mother then handed him his favourite teddy bear, but Rahul continued to cry even louder. His grandmother tried her bit by giving him griewater and also applied a holy paste on his forehead and chanted some *mantras*. But nothing could stop Rahul’s crying.



The neighbours, who heard his cries, came in, each one suggesting a remedy to stop Rahul’s cries. Just then, Rahul’s elder brother came back from his tuition class. He was surprised to see the commotion in the house.

When he saw his brother crying, he noticed that he was crying looking at his shadow. Rahul was trying to catch the shadow’s tuft of hair. When he moved towards the shadow, the shadow also moved. That made him cry. Rahul’s brother made him catch his own hair. Now Rahul burst into laughter, because he saw the shadow also catching its tuft!



Maze Daze

Monish Monkey is having great fun riding Haathi Elephant. Mitra Monkey also wants to join them. Can you help Mitra climb up and reach Haathi's back through the maze?

Find out

Hmph...hmm.. not everything is fine with this scene. Can you find what looks weird here?



Seek 'em out

Something's strange about this tree. My goodness! All the animals in the forest seem to be hiding in it. Check whether you can find them all.

Odd fellow

Squeaky Squirrel and his cousins are good at imitating each other but, not always. Just look closely and you can find out the fellow who looks different from the others.

(Answers on page 64)

Party time

Ah! Ravi Rooster is strumming his guitar. Oops! The artist has forgotten to colour him. Why don't you give Ravi some bright colours?





THE MAN WITH STRANGE INSIGHT

Canada, 9 July 1928. It was a summer night in Edmonton, Alberta. The sky was still aglow with a bright and tender light as it usually is in those remote areas of the Arctic. Dr. Heaslip was about to retire to bed after a busy day. Suddenly, his phone rang loud and clear. “A terrible tragedy has occurred in the Booher farm! Please rush!” said the frantic voice on the other end.

On reaching the ranch, an incredible sight met his eyes. Without further delay, the doctor informed the police headquarters 80 miles away. It was not before long that Inspector Longacre, Detective Leslie, and Constable Olson arrived. They were received by Henry Booher, the owner of the farm, his younger son Veron Booher, Charles Stevenson, a neighbour, and Dr. Heaslip.

The middle-aged farmer, still in a state of shock and disbelief, led the group into the house. In the kitchen lay his wife, Rose Booher, dead from three bullets through the back of her neck. In the next room, sprawled on the floor, was the lifeless body of his elder son, Fred. He, too, had been shot. The third victim was Gabriel Cromby, a hired employee. Two bullets, one in the head and the other in the chest, had killed him. He lay dead in an outhouse nearby.

“Young man, when did you first discover the crime?” asked one of the officers looking at Veron Booher.

“I was working in the fields when I heard the gun shots. It must have been around 8 at night. On rushing into the house, I discovered to my utter dismay the tragedy that had occurred to the family,” he replied rather nervously.

“Didn’t you also hear the gun shots, Mr. Henry? Tell us, is anything missing from the house?” put in Inspector Longacre, turning to the farm owner.

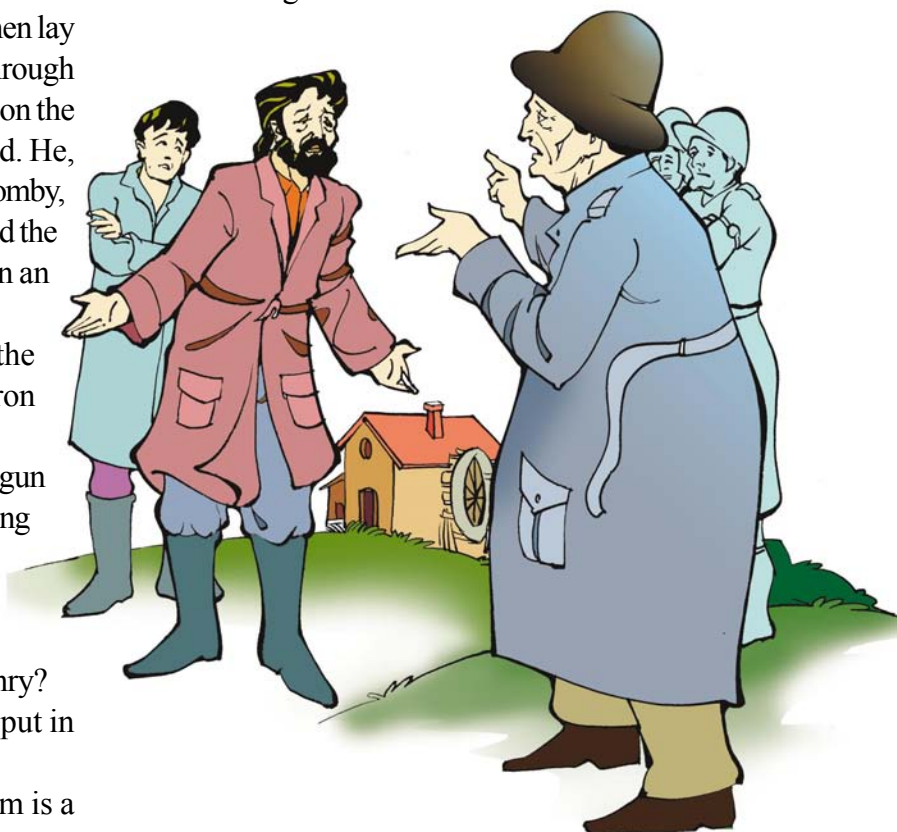
“O God! I wish I had heard them! Our farm is a

large one, as you can see. I was working right on the far end and the sound did not reach me. I don’t think anything has been stolen. My wife had a diamond ring and it’s still shining on her finger,” answered Henry Booher. His eyes were moist.

“We’ve another helping hand in our farm. His name is Rosyk. He is missing. We can’t find him anywhere. Could it be that he’s the culprit?” wondered Veron intently looking at his father.

So the small party began to search the ranch. Suddenly, in one of the barns, they found the missing man, Rosyk. Alas, he too was dead from two bullet injuries. He was the fourth victim.

“Do you have any idea who could be responsible for these killings?” asked Detective Leslie.



“As far as I know, we’ve no enemies. My wife was an extremely amiable person. She was liked by the whole neighbourhood,” replied Henry Booher in a choked voice.

Routine investigations were carried out. No strange fingerprints were found anywhere. Interestingly, there weren’t any bullet shells in the premises. Whoever was the murderer was clever enough to pick them up. But unwittingly he had missed out one in a bowl of water. It was a vital clue! For it proved that the weapon used for the murders was a .303 gun. Where was it?

A thorough search was organised all over the countryside. Alas, the gun remained untraceable, and so were any clues. Not one, but four ghastly murders! They all seemed as mysterious and motiveless.

The officers and the detectives were in a real fix. As conventional methods failed, police chief Mike Gier decided to try out unconventional ones. He sent for a man about whom he had recently heard. The man had extraordinary abilities.

The next day a stranger walked into the police station. He was a small unassuming man, with a hat on his crop of long hair. An umbrella in his hand went tapping on the floor as he moved about. He was Dr. Maximilian Langsner from Vienna. He had come to Canada to study the minds of the Eskimos who, according to him, had unusual intuitive abilities. They could sense weather changes and dangers long before their actual occurrence. He had spent some time in India, too, and had a doctorate from the University of Calcutta. He was much impressed by the progress made by the Indians in the field of intuition and control of the mind.

Could Dr. Langsner really help in solving this mysterious series of murders? He was thoroughly briefed before the inquiry and all the witnesses were examined one after another. The courtroom was packed to capacity.

The two surviving members of the Booher family and their neighbour, Charles Stevenson, were also present.

“Mr. Stevenson, do you by any chance possess a gun?” asked the lawyer.

“I had one, but it was stolen. It was a .303 gun, the same calibre as the one with which the crime was committed,” he replied in a jittery manner.

“Tell us, when did the gun disappear from your house?”

“Sunday last, while I was away in the church. I had seen it before I left home,” he replied.

Both Henry and Veron Booher, when questioned, said that they knew nothing about the gun as they, too, were in the church on the same day and at the same time.

Who could be the mad killer? Was it Henry Booher, Veron Booher? Charles Stevenson? Or somebody else? What would have been his or her motive?

Mike Gier, the police chief, looked at old Dr. Maximilian Langsner after they returned from the court. He had a smile on his face.

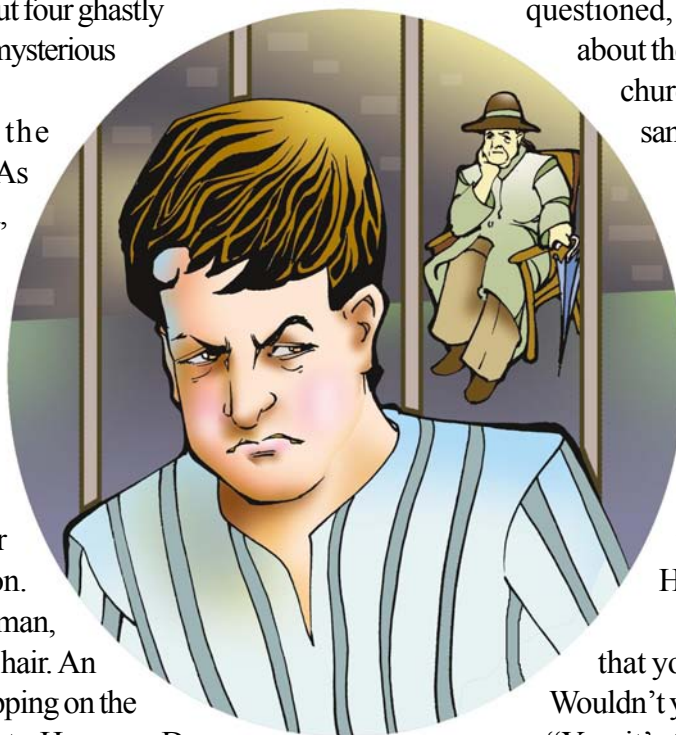
“Sir, your expression tells me that you already know something. Wouldn’t you like to reveal it?”

“Yes, it’s the name of the killer. He is Veron Booher!” he said in a composed tone.

Everyone present was flabbergasted! How could a young boy, the favourite of his mother, commit such a crime? And were there any proofs?

The doctor smiled again before continuing, “There are no proofs! But I stand by my statement. While Veron Booher was giving testimony in the court, I could sense what was going on in his mind and follow his train of thoughts. He is terribly shaken and worried that something might give him up and prove his guilt.”

“Is it the missing gun?” put in the Detective. “Do you know by any chance where it is?”



"Yes, I do," replied the old man. "While Charles Stevenson was informing the court of his stolen gun, Veron began to think of the weapon. I could sense and see where he had hidden it."

"Please do tell us," requested Inspector Longacre.

Dr. Langsner closed his eyes. Then he said slowly and in a measured tone: "The gun is hidden under a mound of grass at the back of the Booher house. It is in the west, because now I can just see the setting sun."

The gun was soon discovered and was sent for examination of the fingerprints on it.

Veron Booher was imprisoned in Edmonton - not as an accused, but as a prime witness in the case and for his own protection. It appeared that he was indeed guilty, but there were no conclusive evidences against him to prove in a court of law.

Veron Booher, Henry Booher, and Charles Stevenson were all in the church on Sunday when the gun was stolen from Stevenson's house. So who stole the gun?

Dr. Langsner requested for a meeting with Veron. He was permitted and he sat on a chair in front of his cell. They were face to face but spoke no word. The young man got irritated and turned his back. But the old man was unperturbed and he just silently stared at him for sixty long minutes. Then he bade him goodbye but got no response.

"Veron Booher is indeed guilty. There's no doubt about it," confirmed the doctor. "First he killed his mother because he had come to hate her for reasons I don't know now. Then one after another, he eliminated all possible eye witnesses. His own brother and the two hired farm hands."

"You may be absolutely right, Dr. Langsner," said chief Mike Gier. "But how do we prove it?"

"While Stevenson was in the church that Sunday, Veron stole his gun," continued the little old man with a

sigh. "In fact, Veron was also in the church. But he sneaked out of the church and then returned and took his seat again. Only one woman, with small round eyes and a bonnet on her head, had observed his movements."

All looked up in admiration at Dr. Maximilian Langsner. How could he know all these details when he was not present? He explained that it was very simple. He just followed the trend of thoughts in Veron when he sat before him in the cell.

The police chief asked his deputy to find the woman the doctor had described. Detective Leslie soon returned to the headquarters with Erma Higgins. She was a very alert and curious little lady. She had indeed observed Veron leave the church and then return that Sunday morning. The culprit was brought to their presence.

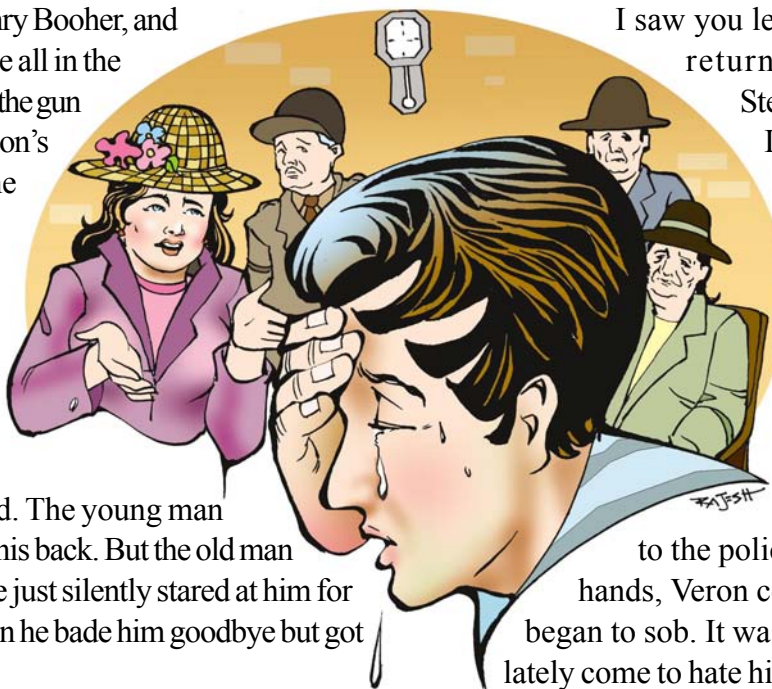
As instructed, Erma Higgins began, "Veron!

I saw you leave the church and then return, the day Charles Stevenson's gun was stolen! Isn't that right?"

The young man looked intently at Erma Higgins and all the others sitting before him. There was pin drop silence! Only the rhythmic ticking of the clock was audible in the

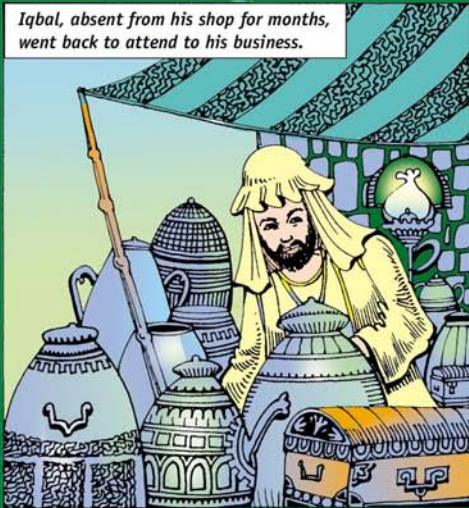
room. Suddenly going up to the police chief, and holding his hands, Veron confessed to his guilt and began to sob. It was a sad sad story. He had lately come to hate his mother because she did not approve of the girl that he loved dearly. What a catastrophe followed the simple discord between mother and son! A year later, Veron Booher was hanged before the tearful eyes of his father.

Good old Dr. Maximilian Langsner, who had the unique gift of reading the thoughts of other people, unravelled puzzling mysteries and helped the police solve many such stubborn cases. Never did he boast of his extraordinary power. He lived very simply and modestly till the last day of his life.

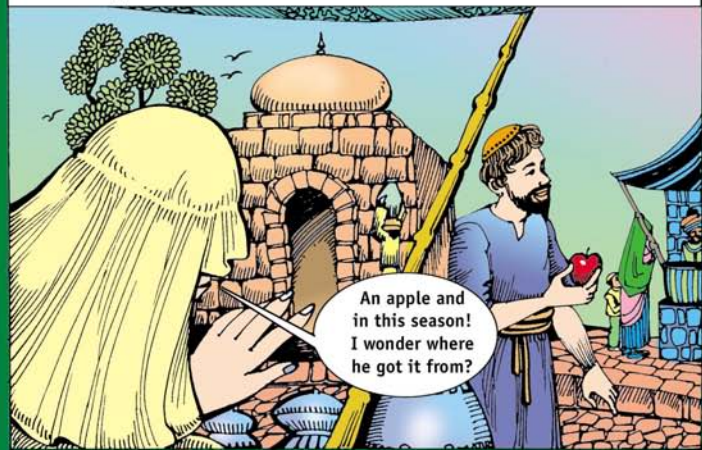


The Arabian Nights : The Costly Apple

Iqbal, absent from his shop for months, went back to attend to his business.



One evening, when he came out after closing the shop, Iqbal noticed a ruffian with an apple in his hand.



An apple and in this season! I wonder where he got it from?



Where did you get that apple, my friend?



There's a very rich merchant in this town. He had brought it from Bassora for his wife. I had gone to see her today and she gave it to me.



Iqbal went home in a rage.

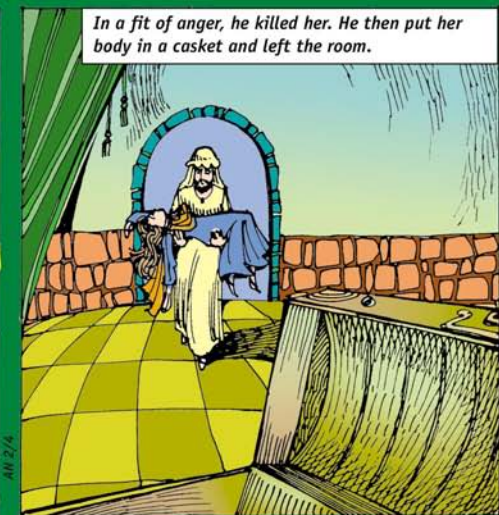
There are only two apples here. Amina, where's the third?



It has been missing since morning. I, too, am looking for it.



Don't lie. You've given it away to a lowdown ruffian. You don't value my love. How much trouble I took to get you those apples, you ungrateful wretch!



In a fit of anger, he killed her. He then put her body in a casket and left the room.

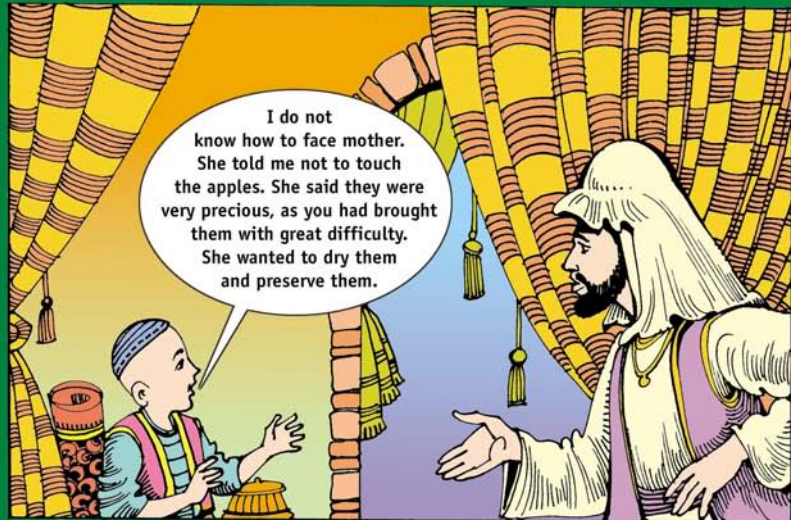
The Arabian Nights : The Costly Apple

As Iqbal came out of the room, he saw his son standing in a corner.



Why are you so gloomy, my son?

I do not know how to face mother. She told me not to touch the apples. She said they were very precious, as you had brought them with great difficulty. She wanted to dry them and preserve them.



"But I stole one apple and started playing with it in the garden."



"As I was throwing and catching it, someone standing outside our garden caught it."

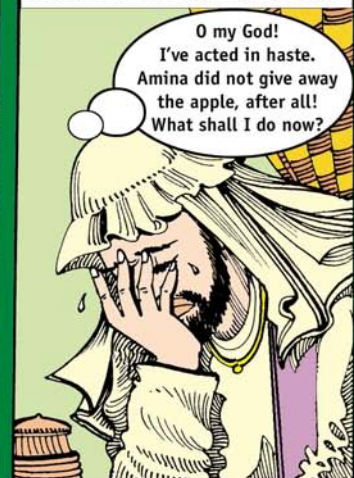


"I told him to give it back, saying my father that he had bought it for my mother. But he ran away with it."



Iqbal realised the blunder he had done.

O my God! I've acted in haste. Amina did not give away the apple, after all! What shall I do now?



He at once went to his father-in-law and told him about the incident.



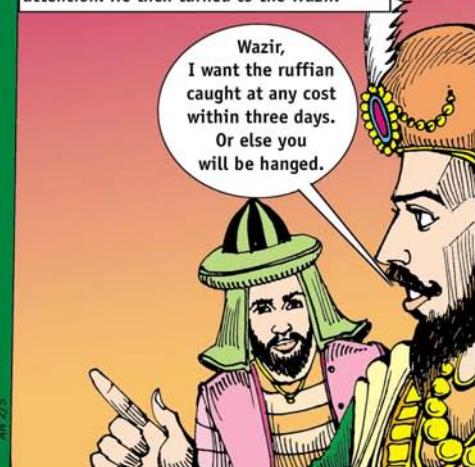
If the Caliph comes to know of this, you'll be in for trouble! Let's get rid of the body.

Both of them then took the casket and floated it in the river.



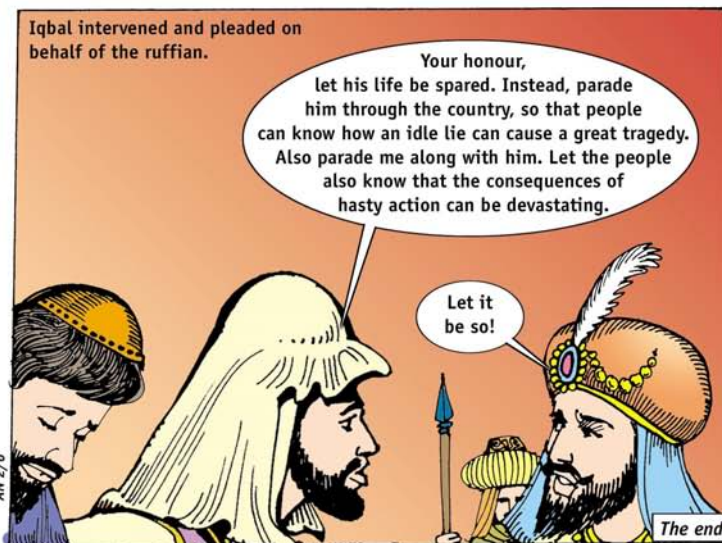
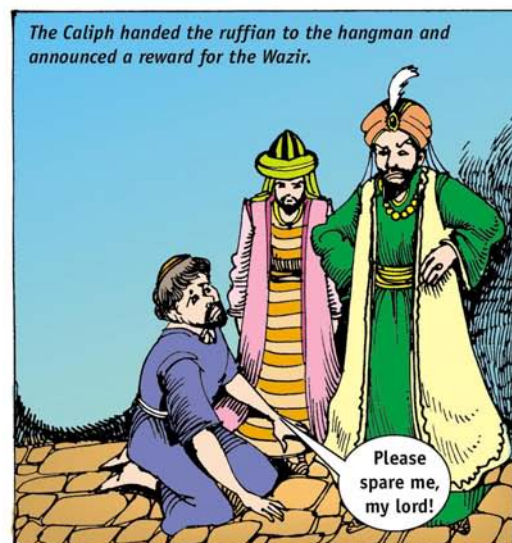
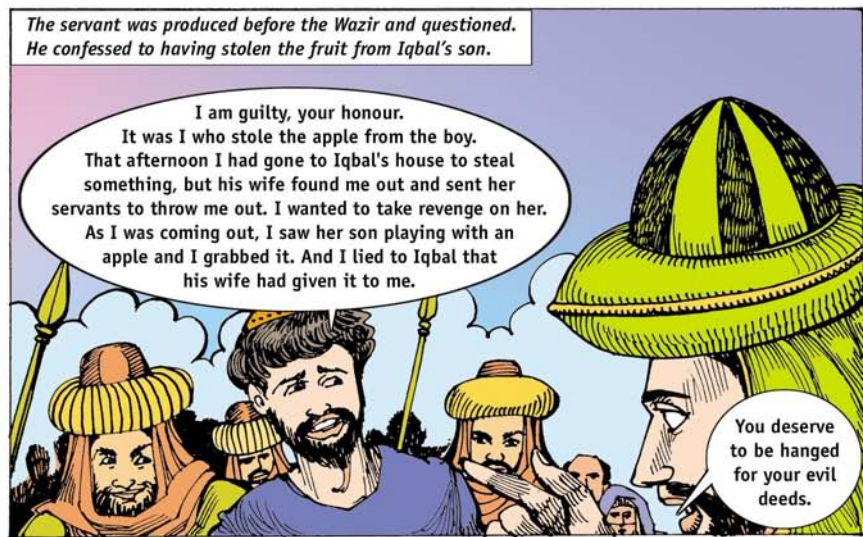
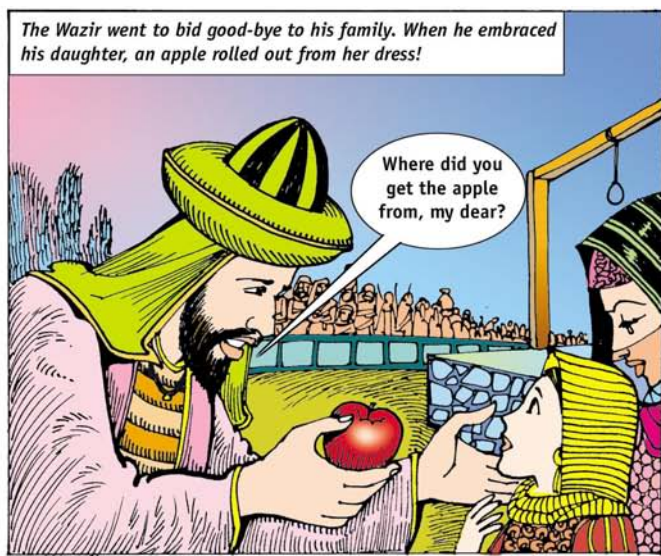
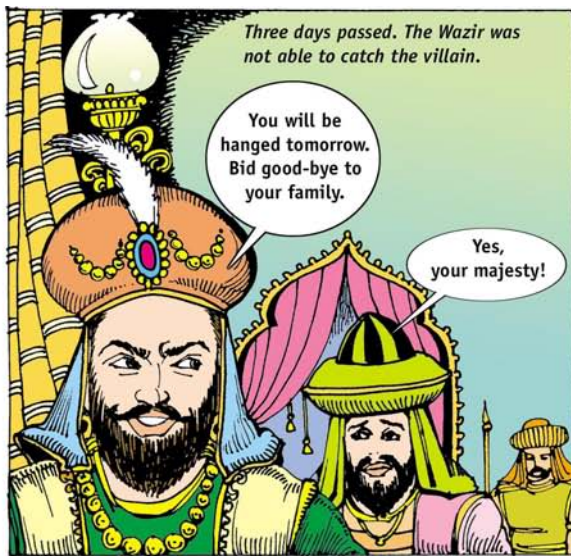
May her soul rest in peace!

The Caliph listened to Iqbal's story with rapt attention. He then turned to the Wazir.



Wazir, I want the ruffian caught at any cost within three days. Or else you will be hanged.

The Arabian Nights : The Costly Apple



Australia - Winners for a third time

ICC WORLD CUP



When two titans fight, there can be only one winner. In World Cup Cricket 2003, victory went to Australia, who retained the championship they had won in 1999 and also created a record by becoming champions for a third time, having won the Cup earlier in 1987. They crossed the record held by West Indies, who had won the first and second World Cup in 1975 and 1979.



In the finals played on March 23 at the Wanderers in Johannesburg, Australia clashed with India who were the best qualified among the other 13 teams, having lost only one game - that, too, to Australia, in a group match. India tasted victory in all the three Super Six matches and the semi-finals and kept up hope of repeating their 1983 performance of beating West Indies. In 1975 and 1979, West Indies had a dream run of victories. They suffered defeat for the first time at the hands of India in the third World Cup in 1983.

In World Cup 2003, Australia beat Pakistan by 82 runs, India 9 wickets, Holland 75 runs,

Zimbabwe 7 wickets, Namibia 256 runs, and England 2 wickets. The three wins in the Super Six matches were at the cost of Sri Lanka by 96 runs, New Zealand also by 96 runs, and Kenya by 5 wickets. They met Sri Lanka again in the semi-finals whom they beat by 48 runs by the Duckworth/Lewis System. In the

finals, Australia defeated India by 125 runs to win the Cup for the second time in succession.

Looking back at some of the previous finals, West Indies in 1975 and 1979, India in 1983, and Australia in 1999 had won the toss and elected to bat — and had won the game. This year, India won the toss, but decided to bowl and lost! India's decision, naturally, raised a controversy whether captain Sourav Ganguly had not erred by asking Australia to bat first. Of course, India have some defenders among analysts and commentators, who feel that in view of the condition of the pitch, Ganguly had not gone wrong in his decision. It had rained in Johannesburg the previous day.

Australia, however, took full advantage of

Out or not out?

That was the question. Australia was playing against Sri Lanka in the semi-final. Vice-Captain and opener Adam Gilchrist was batting. Off-spinner Aravinda de Silva, who was bowling, appealed for a "caught behind" decision. Gilchrist walked back to the pavilion without waiting for the umpire's decision. And that came a minute later: "Not out". But the batsman seemed to have declared himself "out"! Not for nothing is he called 'Gentleman Gilchrist'.



World Cup 2007

The next World Cup to be played in 2007 will be hosted by the West Indies. The USA will co-host the matches, four of which will be played in Florida. The International Cricket Council (ICC) is expected to admit the USA as a playing member, and a team from that country will then be seen in action for the first time.



Missed matches, misses exam

The 'baby' of the Indian team, Parthiv Patel, like two other players, did not get a chance to play in any one of the World Cup matches in South Africa. On his return to his birthplace, Ahmedabad, he said he was not sorry, adding that he would wait for an opportunity to be part of the playing eleven in the days to come. However, "the exposure was very good to me", he contended. Parthiv, however, had another disappointment awaiting him back home. He arrived one day late for his Class X examinations. The Gujarat Education Board could not possibly postpone the exams for the sake of one candidate. Parthiv's school principal remarked that he had missed 50 per cent of attendance last year because of his cricket schedule, and he was also not sure how the boy would have fared in his exam without any preparation. Though he did not play any match, Parthiv Patel stands to receive his contract fee of Rs.2.6 lakh from the Cricket Board. Incidentally, he turned 18 while in South Africa and gave a sumptuous treat to his team mates.

the opportunity they got and went on to score a massive total of 359 runs, and losing only 2 wickets. Solid contributions came from skipper Ricky Ponting, who scored an unbeaten 140 runs off 121 balls. His 234-run third wicket stand with Damien Martyn was a record. Ponting's 140 was the highest individual score in any World Cup final, while Australia's 359 for 2 was the country's highest total in limited overs matches.

Though the total of 359 runs looked formidable, India could have made an honest attempt to score 360 for a win, considering their batting strength to come from Ganguly, Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sehwag, Kaif, and Yuvraj Singh. But they all failed to make any mark - except Sehwag who scored a respectable 82 runs and Dravid a useful 47 runs. India's first wicket fell when the score stood at a paltry 4, and that was a four made by Sachin Tendulkar. It is said, in the 1999 finals at the Oval in London, Australian bowler Glenn McGrath was given the 'assignment' to snare Tendulkar, who had then proved an easy prey. On March 23 last, McGrath was given a similar job and Sachin did not disappoint him! He fell for the very next delivery

from McGrath after scoring a four. Ganguly's was the next wicket to fall and he did not go beyond 24. Kaif who joined Sehwag went back to the pavilion without scoring a single run. Sehwag was run out at 82, and Rahul Dravid was clean bowled when he had scored 47. Those who followed them could not hold on to their innings, and India were bowled out for 234 runs. The World Cup slipped out of India's hands.

However, India had one consolation. Sachin Tendulkar won the Man of the Tournament Award, for his 673 runs in all the 11 matches, which is a new record aggregate in World Cup, besides Sourav Ganguly being the only player in 2003 to make three centuries, and the Indian team being the first to score more than 2,000 runs.



The Australian skipper Ponting, on his arrival in Johannesburg leading his team 45 days earlier, had confidently said that the team would travel back with the World Cup trophy. His was not an off-the-cuff prediction. He wanted to create history, and he did it.

- K.R.

★ *Why is the sound produced by compact discs (CD) so very clear?*

- Bhagyashree Rau, Bangalore

Sound was earlier captured on discs (long playing records) as well as audio-tapes. However, there were possibilities of the discs getting scratched or dirty; tapes in cassettes could also stretch and break. Then came CDs in which sound is sealed for life. The 'playing surface' is never touched and the recordings remain crystal clear for long years.

The computer which records the sound is programmed to reproduce sound more accurately than any other home player, like the gramophone or transistor. The CD is also computerised. The recording is done using computer codes, called digital recording. Inside the CD, a laser beam 'reads' these codes and feeds them to the computer which, in turn, converts the codes back into sound, which is pure and clear without any hiss or crackle.

★ *When did comics start? What is the difference between comics and cartoons?*

Cartoons were drawings intended to illustrate news and editorial opinion, providing at the same time some amusement to the reader. Newspapers used to publish them. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, several magazines specialised in cartoons. *Charivari* in Paris and *Punch* in London were the



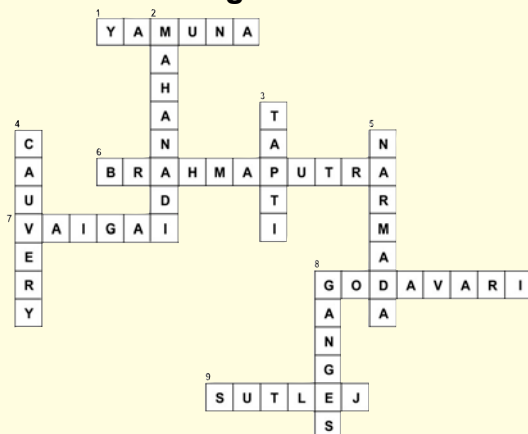
most famous ones. It used to be said, cartoons could even make or mar governments. Such was their powerful appeal. In course of time, cartoons became a regular feature in newspapers.

Some of India's famous cartoonists include Shankar, R.K. Laxman, Abu Abraham, Ahmed, O.V. Vijayan, Unni, Ravi Shankar, and Ranga. There was also *Shankar's Weekly* devoted to cartoons and political satire.

In the early years of the 20th century, comic strips began to appear. Each strip would have two or three frames on the same theme and characters. In 1902 appeared "Buster Brown" in strip form. They were very popular with children. In fact, Buster Brown clothes became the fashion among boys. Then came "Bringing up Father" series. They got translated in some thirty languages, and were published in more than 70 countries. Later, these strips were put in book form and came to be known as Comic books.

PUZZLE DAZZLE Answers

Meandering course



Puneet's Problem

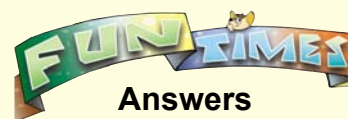
The gold pen was found in the kitchen at 11 a.m.

The keys were found under the bed at noon.

The lucky charm was found in the stuff torn from his pillow at 10 a.m.

He found his pen torch among the shredded papers at 9 a.m.

The wallet was found in the outhouse at 1 p.m.



Answers

Seek 'em out

There are 14 animals hiding in the tree: rat, butterfly, lizard, squirrel, deer, eagle, cat, fox, ladybug, fish, duck, rabbit, bat, and tortoise.

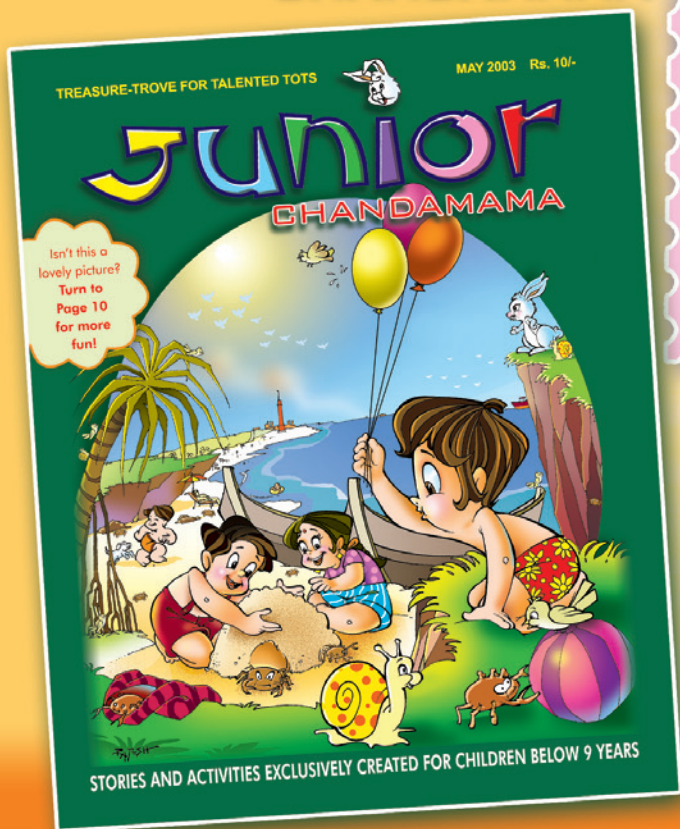
Odd fellow : B

Find Out

The snake has another head instead of a tail.

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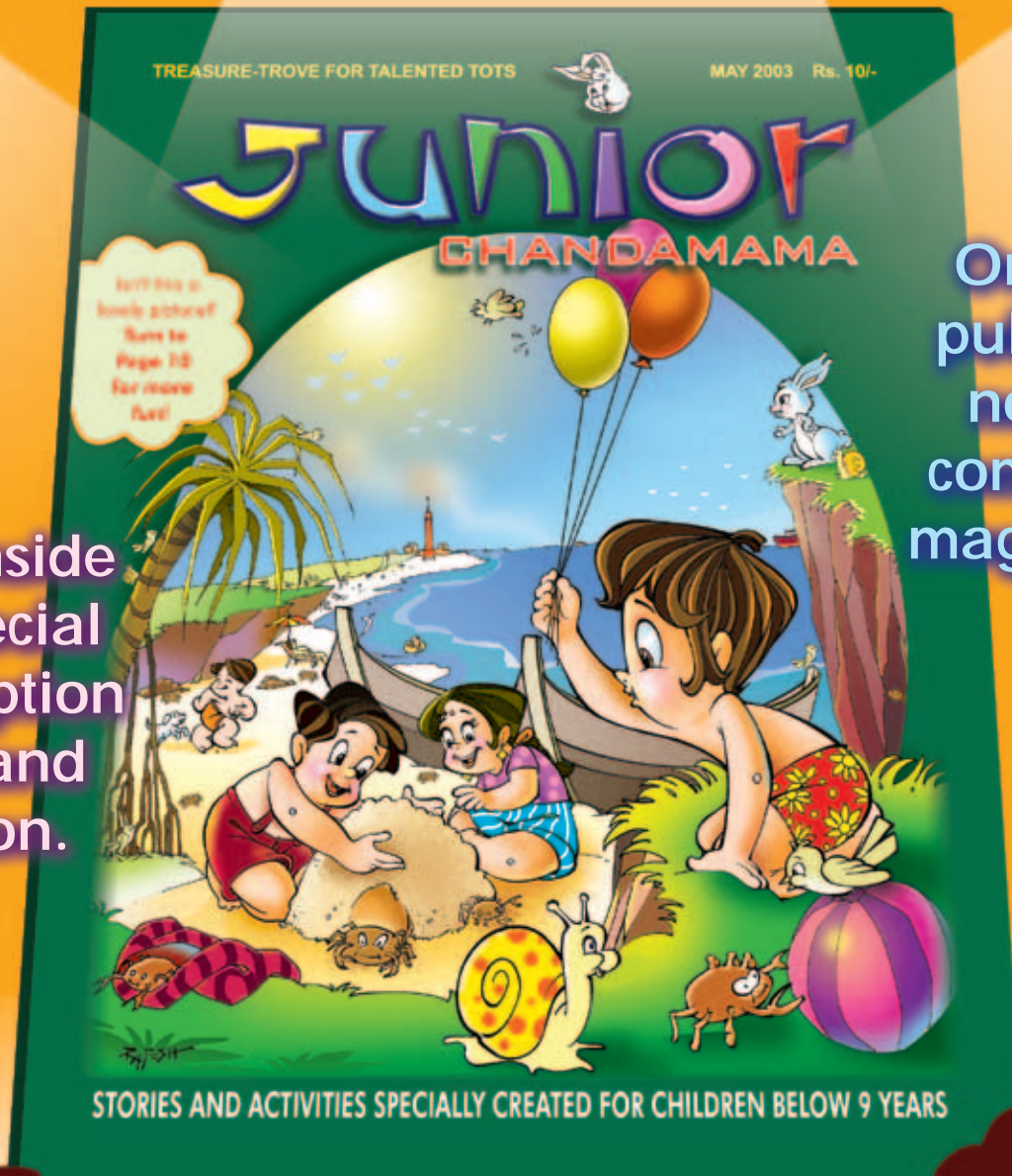
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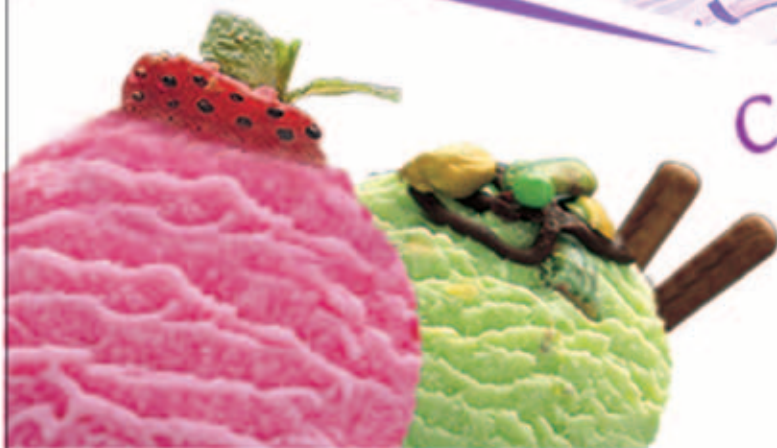
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